



House Bill 0824
**Criminal Procedure – Expungement – Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous
Substance**
In the Judiciary Committee
Committee Hearing on March 3, 2026
Position: Favorable

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its testimony on HB 0824 at the request of Delegate Stinnett.

MLA is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to the State’s low-income and vulnerable residents. Our twelve offices serve residents in each of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions and handle a wide range of civil legal matters including criminal record expungement and workers’ rights.

MLA supports HB 0824. HB 0824 legalizes expungement of distribution convictions. If passed into law, distribution convictions could be expunged after seven years, if the petitioner did not reoffend during that time. This is the same criteria required for the felony offenses that are already eligible for expungement in Maryland. Felony convictions negatively impact an individual’s prospects long after they have repaid their debt to society, by impacting their ability to obtain housing and employment.

HB 0824 would make Maryland’s expungement statute more equitable by allowing expungement of an offense that disproportionately impacts low-income Black communities. Maryland has the nation’s highest racial incarceration gap. Last year, Black Marylanders made up only 30 percent of the State’s overall population, but 71 percent of the prison population.¹ People of color face discriminatorily high arrest, conviction, and incarceration rates as it relates to the use, possession, and sale of controlled substances.² Expanding Maryland’s expungement statute to include distribution charges is a small step towards addressing these discriminatory impacts.

MLA strongly urges a favorable report on HB 0824 to allow for the expungement of distribution convictions.

If you would like additional information on this bill, or the underlying issues it addresses, please contact Meaghan McDermott, Advocacy Director for Community Lawyering and Development, at mmcdermott@mdlaborg.org.

¹ Prison Legal News, *Maryland Targets Highest-in-Nation Racial Incarceration Gap*, Human Rights Defense Center, May 1, 2025, <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2025/may/1/maryland-targets-highest-nation-racial-incarceration-gap/>.

² Center for Policing Equity. (April 2024). *Redesigning Public Safety – Substance Use* at 3. <https://policingequity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CPE-WhitePaper-SubstanceUse.p>