

**HB169 - Criminal Procedure –
Expungement of Records – Good Cause**

**HEARING BEFORE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Shore Legal Access respectfully requests your support for HB169. This bill takes an important and measured step toward expanding access to expungement by authorizing courts to grant expungement after a defined waiting period, upon a showing of good cause and after a hearing. Maryland law currently only allows expungement for specific eligible offenses, leaving many people with convictions without any avenue for relief, regardless of their circumstances, rehabilitation, or age.

Shore Legal Access (SLA) connects people on the Eastern Shore with limited financial means to legal representation and essential community resources. Each year, SLA helps over 3,0000 people in our community access the legal system when they would otherwise be shut out. Our small legal team and network of volunteer lawyers provide free legal services for eviction prevention, criminal record expungement, life and estate planning, family law, foreclosure, and consumer debt. These services help families gain financial and housing stability and give people hope and agency over their future.

SLA serves 8 Eastern Shore counties (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne’s, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester) and has helped hundreds of people on the Eastern Shore to get their records cleared. But only about half of the people who contact us for assistance are eligible. Many of our clients are underemployed, others have invested deeply in education but then were denied employment due to their past record. They share with us their stories of facing exclusion, discrimination, and their struggle to secure employment and housing. When individuals who have completed their sentences are denied access to opportunity solely because of an old conviction, the consequences ripple outward to families, employers, and communities.

HB169 provides a vital pathway to better housing and employment for people who have completed their sentences and rebuilt their lives. We ask the Committee for a favorable report to help Maryland families move forward. For more information about our position, please feel free to reach out to Meredith Girard, Esq., Executive Director, at: mgirard@shorelegal.org, 410-690-8128.



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