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Testimony of the Human Trafficking Prevention Project

BILL NO: House Bill 360
TITLE: Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: March 3, 2026
POSITION: FAVORABLE

[The Human Trafficking Prevention Project](#) (“HTPP”) is dedicated to ending the criminalization of sex workers and survivors of human trafficking through access to civil legal services and support for policies that dismantle harmful systems and increase access to basic human rights and legal relief. **The HTPP supports House Bill 360.**

House Bill 360, the Clean Slate Act of 2026, will automate the sealing process and shield from public view **already eligible misdemeanor records** after seven years have passed, and **already eligible non-conviction and arrest records** after three years have passed. In doing so, this legislation sets forth a much-needed pathway in Maryland to a meaningful second chance, one that is accessible to everyone who earns it. House Bill 360 is narrowly tailored, excluding serious offenses, and only shielding records from public view, i.e., does not impact jail and police records or law enforcement access. House Bill 360 ensures that people are no longer perpetually defined by their criminal records and are better positioned to work, pursue education, secure housing, and contribute fully to their communities.

While the HTPP tries to reach as many criminalized survivors as possible, we know that the majority remain in the shadows, struggling with the far-reaching collateral consequences of criminal records that oftentimes keep them trapped in the very industries and violent relationships they seek to escape. Maryland’s current petition-based record clearance system places the administrative burden on individuals, requiring legal knowledge, time, financial resources, and navigation of complex court processes. As a result, most people who are eligible for relief never receive it. [Research consistently shows that under petition-based systems, uptake rates range from as low as 0.2% to 11% nationwide, leaving millions of eligible individuals without relief.](#) In fact, Maryland actually ranks among the lowest in the country in eligible individuals receiving relief. In Maryland, approximately 407,000 adults are currently eligible for full record clearance, [yet only about 2% of eligible individuals obtain relief under the existing system.](#) At current rates, it would take decades to clear all eligible records.

House Bill 360 establishes an automated process that is administrative in nature and occurs years after a sentence has been fully completed. It does not involve a courtroom proceeding, modify a sentence in any way, or affect a victim’s right to collect restitution. However, through HB 360’s administrative process, automated record sealing directly addresses the relief gap by shielding the record from public view, while maintaining the record in the court’s database coded as a conviction, which allows some form of criminal record relief to reach those that programs like the HTPP don’t. For criminalized survivors, this is a lifesaving opportunity and a critical bridge for these crime victims as they try to move on with their lives after violence and trauma. **For these reasons, the Human Trafficking Prevention Project supports House Bill 360 and respectfully urges a favorable report.**

*For more information, please contact:
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Survival Should Not Be Criminalized.