



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 169:

Good Cause Expungements

March 3rd, 2026

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Steven McDonald

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Steven McDonald. I am a resident of District 28 in Charles County, a member of Out for Justice, and a Master Plumber with Local 5 Plumbers and Gasfitters. **I write in strong support of House Bill 169, Good Cause Expungements, because it would allow courts to evaluate rehabilitation instead of forcing people to live indefinitely with technical statutory barriers.** As a constituent of Vice Chair Davis, I appreciate the Committee's consideration of how this legislation would directly affect me as a District 28 resident.

When I was 18 years old, after a serious spine injury, I was prescribed OxyContin during a period when addiction risks were not adequately explained. I developed a dependency that led to my only criminal charge related to obtaining a prescription drug. My charge falls under Criminal Law §5-701(d)(4). Although other statutes that criminalize substantially similar conduct, including §5-601 and §8-610, are eligible for expungement or are being added to the expungement list, §5-701(d)(4) is not. **The conduct is materially the same, but because of how the statute is labeled, I am categorically excluded from relief. That inconsistency is what keeps my record in place.**

I completed my sentence and have now been clean for 10 years. Since my release in 2014, I have rebuilt my life. I graduated from a five year apprenticeship program with Local 5 Plumbers and Gasfitters, obtained multiple licenses, and passed my Master Plumber examination. I am a father and the primary provider for my child. I have invested in my trade, my family, and my community.

Yet my record continues to undermine my professional stability. Over 70% of union plumbing work involves government contracts or job sites that require background clearance. **Because of my conviction, I am repeatedly denied placement despite being fully licensed and qualified. I have the credentials, experience, and demand for my skill set. What I lack is equal access. The record creates instability in my income and limits my ability to advance and grow within my field.**



House Bill 169 provides a structured path forward. It allows a petition after five years for misdemeanors and seven years for felonies following completion of sentence and supervision, requires a hearing, and permits a court to grant expungement on a showing of good cause. Judges must evaluate the nature of the offense, rehabilitation, time passed, public safety, and the impact on employment and economic stability. That framework restores discretion and aligns relief with demonstrated growth.

This bill does not erase accountability. It restores proportionality by allowing a judge to consider who I am today; a skilled tradesman, a father, and a man who has maintained long term recovery.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 169 so that individuals like me are not permanently defined by a technical statutory distinction rather than our rehabilitation and contribution.

Thank you for your consideration.