

Dear **Members of the Judiciary Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted in collaboration with Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore and Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 46**. I am a workforce development professional, organizational psychology practitioner, community association board member, and proud resident of Baltimore City. **I am testifying in support of HB360 - the Clean Slate Act.**

In principle, eligibility for criminal-record expungement expanded with the Maryland General Assembly's passage of the Justice Reinvestment and REDEEM Acts. In practice, however, an overwhelming majority of people who could have their charges expunged never petition the courts for expungement. They may be unaware they are eligible, or they may be unable to navigate the process in an overburdened court system. The result is that only a tiny percentage of Marylanders whose convictions are eligible for expungement—less than 10%—actually get their records expunged within 5 years of becoming eligible.<sup>1</sup>

This does lasting damage. Charges that people could have had expunged may instead remain on their records permanently, which can make them unable to rent an apartment, obtain employment or work credentials, gain admission to college or to programs that help pay for college, keep custody of their children, access some government services, or vote in elections.<sup>2</sup> These avoidable consequences don't merely limit the lives of the people directly affected; they weaken entire communities, and the entire state, by shutting out people who want to participate meaningfully.

**HB360** would protect people from the stigma of unexpunged convictions by automating parts of the expungement process. It would require the courts to remove from public view (including the website for judiciary case searches) all offenses that are eligible for expungement, without the necessity of an expungement request form the person whose case it is. This ensures that a "clean slate" is available not just in principle, but in practice, for any Marylanders who are eligible. The benefits accrue to all of us.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB360 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

**John Preston Ford**

**529 S East Ave, Baltimore, MD 21224**

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<sup>1</sup> C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev.*, 119(3).  
<https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america> Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists,  
<https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland>

<sup>2</sup> The People's Law Library of Maryland, "Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record," <https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record>; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, "Expungement"  
<https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/>