



# Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy

*LIVED EXPERIENCE. REAL SOLUTIONS.*

March 3, 2026

The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
101 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: HB819 – Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland –  
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the committee:

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB819 on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy (MASDP), a state-wide advocacy group led by people with lived or living experience with substance use.

For many of our members, an expungement is not just a "fresh start." It represents a confusing process, filled with technicalities, and often completely out-of-reach without an attorney. As such, many of our members who qualify for relief on paper continue to be hampered by old records. This is particularly true for those whose cases involve multiple charges, jurisdictions and/or dispositions that create complications.

HB819 takes a practical first step towards addressing these challenges by creating a commission to study the expungement laws and processes in place in Maryland, determining if there are ways to make them more efficient and equitable, and developing an alternative statutory process that makes it easier for people to get the relief they deserve. This is exactly what Maryland needs: not another small fix added to an already very complicated system, but a serious look at how the entire system functions for real people looking to move forward with their lives.

This need is real and continues to grow. The Administrative Office of the Courts reported tens of thousands of expungement petitions filed each year from 2022 through 2025. HB819 recognizes that expungement is not a specialty issue; rather, it is a large-scale opportunity that impacts the ability of people to find employment, obtain housing and achieve stability throughout our state. HB819 is also an equity measure. While the exact impact will depend on

the commission's recommendations, the Black and Brown Marylanders could benefit the most given their overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. If the process remains confusing and attorney-dependent, then the people with the least access to time, money, transportation, and legal help will keep being the ones left behind, even when policy says they are eligible for relief.

Finally, HB819 is a responsible investment. The fiscal note anticipates only minimal costs to staff the commission, with no effect on local governments and no impact on State revenues. In exchange, Maryland gets a concrete roadmap to turn a confusing, fragmented system into one that is clear, accessible, and fair.

### **Request**

For these reasons, MASDP respectfully requests a **favorable report** on HB819. Thank you for your consideration. If we can be a resource to the Committee, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Thomas Higdon  
Executive Director  
Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy  
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