

**HB 819 FAV MDHTTF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Amanda Rodriguez

Position: FAV



**BILL NUMBER:** HB 819

**TITLE:** Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland

**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary

**HEARING DATE:** 3/3/2026

**POSITION:** FAV

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF) is Maryland's coordinated, multi-disciplinary response to human trafficking, bringing together federal, state, and local law enforcement, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to identify and support survivors and hold traffickers accountable. The Legislative Subcommittee includes members from law enforcement, victim advocacy organizations, service providers, government entities, and faith-based partners, and works to improve Maryland's human trafficking laws, partner with legislators, and testify on key legislation each session. On behalf of the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 819.

HB 819 creates a Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland for the purpose of comprehensively reviewing Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the Criminal Procedure Article and developing a more efficient and equitable statutory scheme. For human trafficking survivors, this is not an abstract policy question; the structure of Maryland's expungement laws directly determines whether they can access safety, housing, employment, and long-term stability. Multiple surveys over the past decade consistently show that between 70% and 90% of trafficking survivors have criminal records, meaning they are far more likely to appear in court as defendants than as victim-witnesses against their traffickers. When those records cannot be cleared, survivors remain blocked from the very opportunities they need to exit exploitation and rebuild their lives.

Maryland has taken important steps toward recognizing the value of record relief, including the Maryland Second Chance Act of 2015 and the Justice Reinvestment Act of 2016, which expanded shielding and expungement eligibility for certain offenses. However, because the current expungement statute is written so that nothing is eligible unless specifically listed, progress has occurred only through incremental, piecemeal additions each legislative session. This year alone, there are multiple bills seeking to adjust small portions of the statute or add individual offenses, a pattern that repeats every year and consumes significant time for both advocates and legislators.

Under this “everything is excluded until included” model, relatively minor offenses can remain ineligible for expungement for years, even when there is no meaningful public-safety reason for ongoing exclusion.

For criminalized trafficking survivors, this “cherry picking” system has especially harmful consequences. Providers are forced to hope that survivors were convicted of the “right” offenses and, too often, must tell them that some convictions tied directly to their exploitation cannot be expunged—not because of any articulable risk, but simply because those offenses have not yet been added to the statute. This dynamic keeps survivors in cycles of poverty, with records that bar them from jobs, housing, and education, and undermines trust in both the legal system and service providers. Survivors hear that Maryland is committed to their recovery, yet the law often leaves them permanently marked by criminalization that arose from their victimization.

HB 819 offers a thoughtful solution by pausing the piecemeal process and establishing a commission to conduct a comprehensive review and propose an alternative framework. The Commission is tasked with examining Maryland’s expungement laws for efficiency and equity, reviewing comparable states’ approaches, and developing a statutory scheme that provides a streamlined process and broader eligibility. A central goal is to invert the current model so that expungement is presumed available except for clearly defined exclusions, rather than requiring lawmakers to add each eligible offense one by one. This would make the law more understandable for the public, reduce unnecessary court time spent denying petitions on technical grounds, and create a more predictable pathway to relief for survivors and other Marylanders seeking to move forward.

The Commission’s membership structure is another key strength of HB 819. It includes legislators, the Maryland State’s Attorneys’ Association, the Office of the Public Defender, the State Court Administrator, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, researchers, workforce organizations, crime victims’ advocacy groups (including those serving criminalized survivors of violence), and individuals with criminal records currently ineligible for expungement. Amendments are being prepared to ensure representation from domestic violence and sexual assault survivor organizations, whose clients face similar barriers and whose expertise will further ground the Commission’s recommendations in lived experience. This diverse, balanced body is well-positioned to craft a framework that promotes both equity for survivors and public safety for communities.

For trafficking survivors, access to expungement is a lifesaving form of relief: it opens doors to employment, safe housing, education, family stability, and long-term safety from re-exploitation. A comprehensive review through the Commission created by HB 819 is the most effective way to replace Maryland’s piecemeal approach with a streamlined, fair, and accessible expungement system that truly reflects the State’s commitment to survivors.

For these reasons, the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee respectfully urges the Judiciary Committee to issue a Favorable report on House Bill 819.

For further inquiries, please contact Amanda Rodriguez, Esq., Chair, MDHTTF Legislative Committee, at [arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org](mailto:arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org).

# **AmberWhalen\_ExpungementCommission\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Amber Whalen

Position: FAV

Good afternoon Chair Bartlett and members of the Committee.

My name is Amber Whalen, and I'm a resident of District 6. I'm here today to share my personal experience and ask you to support HB 819, Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland.

Before I tell you what's on my record, I want to tell you who I was when I got it. I had never been in a trouble a day in my life. I earned my Associate's Degree from Howard Community College and was building a career as an educator in Baltimore County public schools.

Then I had a mental health crisis. I have bipolar 1 disorder, along with depression and anxiety. This all started because of a manic episode: I wasn't sleeping, I was checking myself in and out of the hospital, and the medicines I was proscribed were only making things worse.

While this was happening, my employer made a payroll error, leaving me behind on rent and bills. Every time I tried to get help, I was sent back to the same HR representative who told me over and over she couldn't help me.

Because I was manic, I snapped and sent threatening messages to the HR representative. I told her I was going to come in and shoot her. I have never owned a gun. I have never been violent. I have no history of threatening behavior. I was not and am not a threat. I was a young woman in crisis who needed care, not a criminal record. But because multiple people worked in the office (*not* the school) where she worked, I was convicted of a threat of mass violence.

Because of how background screening works, I never get the opportunity to explain what happened. Employers see my record and move on. I have to live with my mother. I can't even adopt a dog or volunteer at an animal shelter.

People who see my background think I'm dangerous, that I'm a terrorist. I hope that in the time I've had to speak with you today, you can see that I am not. I'm just a normal person, trying my best, who the fallout of a mental health crisis has defined ever since.

This commission would allow the legislature and experts to examine cases like mine and others and decide whether we're deserving of a clean record.

Thank you.

**HB819\_ArielleJuberg\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Arielle Juberg

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judiciary Committee**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of District 8. **I am testifying in support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

Over the past decade, the General Assembly has done a great deal of important work reforming the expungement laws in Maryland.

This work has ensured that many more people who have rehabilitated themselves have been able to move on from past mistakes and participate fully in society without the stigma of having a criminal record. When Marylanders are not barred from housing, jobs, and opportunities based on years' (or decades') old convictions, our communities and our state benefit.

Despite these changes, the expungement process remains opaque to many people, and burdensome to the courts and to agencies working to comply with expungement law. Many people who have become eligible to expunge past convictions, acquittals, and dismissals are simply unaware of the possibility. It is time to take another look at the expungement law as a whole, with an eye to streamlining and simplifying the process, and making expungement more available to citizens who have left their previous mistakes behind them.

HB819 would establish a commission to conduct this review. By bringing all the stakeholders in the expungement process together to discuss what is and is not working, and what might be possible, we can spur further reform of the expungement laws that will operate to the benefit of everyone.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Arielle Juberg  
3411 Upton Road  
Baltimore, MD 21234  
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

# **Commission.pdf**

Uploaded by: Christopher Sweeney

Position: FAV



**JUSTICE FOR ALL**

MARYLAND HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
TESTIMONY OF MARYLAND VOLUNTEER LAWYERS SERVICE

**IN SUPPORT OF HB0819:**  
**COMMISSION TO EXAMINE THE EXPUNGEMENT LAWS OF MARYLAND**  
**MARCH 3, 2026**

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Chair Bartlett and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 0819. My name is Chris Sweeney, and I am a staff attorney at Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS), where I manage our Workforce Development Project. MVLS is the oldest and largest provider of pro bono civil legal services to low-income Marylanders throughout the state. Since MVLS' founding in 1981, our statewide panel of over 700 volunteers has provided free legal services to over 115,000 Marylanders in a wide range of civil legal matters. Through our Workforce Development project, we represent many clients seeking sustainable, fulfilling employment. One of the major barriers to employment is a criminal record, and we have represented over 1,000 clients in expungement proceedings. For the reasons explained below, MVLS respectfully requests the committee return a favorable report on HB 0819.

MVLS' Workforce Development Project is a partnership with occupational training programs in Baltimore City and is a continuation of the Mayor's Office's 'One Baltimore for Jobs' pilot program. The goal of the program is to make participants more job-ready by reducing barriers to employment. Each of the clients we serve through the Workforce Development Project is enrolled in courses to receive job skills training and certification in welding, machine operation, nursing, pharmacy tech, construction, and weatherization. These non-profit programs are free to students and aim to provide re-entry opportunities for the previously incarcerated or those who lacked educational and employment opportunities due to poverty. The majority of clients we see through this project have criminal cases on their records.

HB0819 continues the important work this legislature has done over the past decade to advance justice for those who live with a criminal record. Many pieces of legislation, including the Justice Reinvestment Act, the REDEEM Act, and the Expungement Reform Act of 2025, have provided critical relief for Marylanders burdened by a criminal record. But existing laws still allow many people to fall through the cracks, and leave them with a permanent record for low-level offenses.

In particular, the list of eligible convictions found in Criminal Procedure 10-110 omits many nonviolent misdemeanors and results in unjust outcomes. To provide some examples: We allow for expungement of illicit drug possession, but not for obtaining prescription drugs fraudulently – a policy that harshly impacts victims of the opioid crisis. We allow for expungement of open container, but not for drinking in public. Many common citations like this have county-level laws that are not captured by the statute as-written. We allow for expungement of the charge “trespassing on posted property” but not “trespassing on private property.” We do not allow expungement of a citation for riding a bike on the sidewalk, yet we’ve included several felony convictions in the statute.

Most concerningly, each low-level offense not captured by the statute compounds into permanent criminal records for offenses otherwise deemed eligible, since a subsequent conviction will block a prior case from being expunged.

Without a careful examination of the gaps in the current statute, hundreds of Marylanders languish with the consequences of a criminal record – denial of access to housing, inability to find stable employment, child custody and parental rights issues, social stigma, and more. All of this for largely nonviolent misdemeanor offenses that were omitted from the statute.

MVLS has been fighting to even the playing field for low-income Marylanders for decades, and we know that these members of our community face significant financial obstacles when trying to put their lives back on track. HB0819 would advance our vision of a more just Maryland. This vision includes a system where people convicted of non-violent crimes, who have paid their debt to society and left their past behind them, can seek employment without fear of rejection. We at MVLS respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 0819.

Miss Chair and members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

# **HB819 - commission on expungement laws.pdf**

Uploaded by: Daryl Yoder

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judiciary Committee**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of District 44A. **I am testifying in support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

Over the past decade, the General Assembly has done a great deal of important work reforming the expungement laws in Maryland.

This work has ensured that many more people who have rehabilitated themselves have been able to move on from past mistakes and participate fully in society without the stigma of having a criminal record. When Marylanders are not barred from housing, jobs, and opportunities based on years' (or decades') old convictions, our communities and our state benefit.

Despite these changes, however, the expungement process remains opaque to many people, and burdensome to the courts and to agencies working to comply with expungement law. Many people who have become eligible to expunge past convictions, acquittals, and dismissals are simply unaware of the possibility. It is time to take another look at the expungement law as a whole, with an eye to streamlining and simplifying the process, and making expungement more available to citizens who have left their previous mistakes behind them.

SB464 would establish a commission to conduct this review. By bringing all the stakeholders in the expungement process together to discuss what is and is not working, and what might be possible, we can spur further reform of the expungement laws that will operate to the benefit of everyone.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Daryl Yoder  
309 Glenmore Ave.  
Catonsville, MD 21228  
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

**DerekLiggins\_FAV\_HB819.pdf**

Uploaded by: Derek Liggins

Position: FAV

My name is Derek Liggins and I am writing to support House Bill 819, Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland.

The laws around expungement are one of the main causes of the lack of growth in the black community. With a favorable vote on this bill, it will change lives and remove some of the barriers that impact returning citizens so they can be successful if we truly believe in rehabilitation.

I'm a returning citizen living in Baltimore City's 45th district. My conviction was in 1994. Since then, I've become a homeowner and I have been employed with the same mechanical engineering company for the past 15 years.

In 1987, while I was working at a factory in Baltimore manufacturing train parts, I had to walk home through Hampden, which in the late 80s was notorious for being dangerous for black people to walk through. As you may know if you are from Baltimore, Hampden was the home of the Ku Klux Klan in Baltimore for over a century. To protect myself, I carried an icepick in case I was attacked by a group of individuals. Hampden is also famous because one year after my incident, one of the first Black families who moved in received bomb threats and had their house vandalized.

As I was walking home, a police officer stopped me because I was a black man walking through a white neighborhood after midnight, and when he searched me found the weapon I was carrying for self-defense.

I was convicted of having a deadly weapon with the intent to injure, a misdemeanor. I have no other convictions for violent crime. I will also note that this may be classified as a crime of violence, because it is weapons related, but no one was attacked or injured. I was simply carrying a weapon to protect myself.

My record has directly affected my income. As my company takes on more government contracts, I can't work those government contracts because of the current expungement laws.

With the scale wage that's paid on these contracts I could make an extra \$20,000 per year. This bill could make a difference in my life, my family's life and people like me. I'm asking for a favorable vote on this bill.

# **HB 819 Expungement Commission CCJR FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Heather Warnken

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 819

### Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law

DATE: February 27, 2026

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The University of Baltimore School of Law's Center for Criminal Justice Reform ("Center") is dedicated to supporting community-driven efforts to improve public safety and address the harm and inequities caused by the criminal legal system. **The Center strongly supports House Bill 819.**

For many years, policymakers, advocates, directly impacted communities and others have worked hard to tackle critical issues of efficiency, equity, and public safety surrounding the expungement process in Maryland. Often out of necessity this work has been done in a piecemeal fashion, one issue, challenge, or charge at a time. **House Bill 819 seeks to move the state forward with a more holistic and strategic approach.** It establishes a Commission to review the state's expungement statute in its entirety, alongside other relevant developments in research, law and policy, impacting these important issues in the country and state.

Much has shifted in the decade since Maryland passed the Justice Reinvestment Act, including the growing recognition and documentation of the myriad ways that thousands of collateral consequences of a conviction follow individuals in perpetuity after their sentence is fully served, impeding access to stable housing, employment, professional licensing and more. As a result, every year lawmakers and impacted constituents have returned to this legislature seeking to add eligible charges to the statute, remove barriers, expand access, or otherwise address critical components of this process. There are at least six bills seeking to again amend the expungement statute before this Committee in this year's legislative session alone.

If established, this Commission would bring a more coordinated, collaborative and strategic examination of this body of law and its impact on Maryland communities as a whole. The Commission's membership is intentionally diverse and inclusive of a range of critical perspectives needed to address oversights in eligibility, and to ensure a process that advances and protects public safety. The Commission will also provide the opportunity to review the growing body of research in this area to inform a more equitable and effective approach, based on needed data analysis and lessons learned in other states.

**For these reasons, the Center urges a favorable report on House Bill 819.**

# **HPP Testimony- HB 819 (FAV).pdf**

Uploaded by: Jessica Emerson

Position: FAV

## Testimony of the Human Trafficking Prevention Project

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<b>BILL NO:</b>	House Bill 819
<b>TITLE:</b>	Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland
<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Judicial Proceedings
<b>HEARING DATE:</b>	March 3, 2026
<b>POSITION:</b>	<b>FAVORABLE</b>

House Bill 819 will create a commission to examine Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the Criminal Procedure Article for the purpose of redesigning the statute for efficiency and equity. The Human Trafficking Prevention Project strongly supports this bill because it would provide a much-needed examination of Maryland's expungement laws – creating an opportunity to efficiently correct oversights in eligibility and improve the expungement process so that it is more access accessible, efficient, and equitable while still promoting public safety.

The opportunity to streamline and improve Maryland's expungement scheme is of critical importance to the criminalized survivors the HTPP serves, as this will enable them to more readily access the opportunities they need to better their lives by lessening or eliminating the collateral consequences of having a criminal record. The criminalization of trafficking survivors is an epidemic of astounding proportions, with [multiple surveys conducted](#) over the past decade **consistently putting the rate of criminalization between 70 and 90%**. What this means is that trafficking survivors are far more likely to appear as a **defendant in a criminal case** than as a victim-witness in one against their trafficker.

Thankfully, Maryland law has increasingly recognized the life-altering benefits of expungement. In 2015, the General Assembly passed the [Maryland Second Chance Act](#), which provided for a limited list of misdemeanors to be eligible for shielding after three years have passed. With the [Justice Reinvestment Act of 2016](#), the General Assembly extended this approach by authorizing the expungement of enumerated misdemeanors after a 10-year waiting period without subsequent convictions. Since then, expungement law has incrementally expanded nearly every year, which take a tremendous amount of time and effort on the part of both advocates and legislators.

For instance, this Legislative Session, there are no fewer than six bills considering amendments to the expungement statute: [SB 315/HB 131](#) (concerning the expungement of adverse actions and removal from MDEC); [SB 320/HB 187](#) (allowing the expungement of no finding dispositions); [SB 525/HB 169](#) (authorizing good cause applications for expungement under § 10-110 of the expungement statute); [HB 113](#) (adding Crim. L. §§ 9-408, 9-501, 9-502 to the list of eligible charges); [HB 362](#) (clarifying the effect of expungement); [HB 397](#) (adding Crim. L. § 9-405 to the list of eligible charges); [SB 483/HB 360](#) (Clean Slate Act); and [HB 824](#) (adding Crim. L. § 5-602(a) to the list of eligible felonies).

The need for frequent amendments to the law is due in large part to the law's design. By employing a piecemeal approach whereby the law lists the offenses that are *eligible* for expungement, rather than more simply identifying the crimes *excluded* from it, relatively minor offenses remain ineligible for expungement until they are affirmatively considered for inclusion, such as driving on a suspended license, which was not eligible for expungement until 2021 after years of rejected petitions and legislative advocacy. However, once a charge is identified for inclusion in the statute, it can take years to correct, as each individual change competes with the many important priorities of each legislative session. Furthermore, this results in the public being entirely in the dark as to what they are eligible to expunge, wasting valuable court time as petition after petition is denied by judges who are forced to hear heartbreaking stories about defendants rebuilding their lives, only to have no legal means of supporting them in their work toward that goal.

What this “cherry picking” approach looks like in practice for criminalized trafficking survivors is HTPP staff having to cross their fingers every time they meet a new survivor, hoping that they were convicted of the “right” offenses rather than having to explain to them, as they so often have to, that their particular convictions just aren’t eligible under Maryland [vacatur](#) or expungement law, usually for no particular reason that can be articulated. This serves only to reinforce survivors’ beliefs that those in charge of creating and enforcing the law are only paying them lip service when they say they care about the recovery of trafficking survivors, because the reality is that **a survivor’s inability to clear their criminal record plays a far larger role in keeping them trapped in the cycle of poverty and exploitation than any amount of support they are given.**

The opportunity to access expungement is an important mechanism for all Marylanders to move beyond their mistakes and have the economic and familial stability that promotes a law-abiding life. For criminalized survivors, however, expungement 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. It’s time to stop blocking real progress on expungement out of fear that a very small percentage might abuse these laws, and instead find ways to identify and work around them. This commission, and the diversity of voices on it, are essential to that goal. **For these reasons, the Human Trafficking Prevention Project supports House Bill 819 and respectfully urges a favorable report.**

***The Human Trafficking Prevention Project 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.***

*For more information, please contact:  
Jessica Emerson, LMSW, Esq.  
Director, Human Trafficking Prevention Project  
(E): [jemerson@htprevention.org](mailto:jemerson@htprevention.org)*

**Survival Should Not Be Criminalized.**

# **HB819 - favorable - John Ford.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Ford

Position: FAV

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 HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland**

Over the past decade, the General Assembly has done a great deal of important work reforming the expungement laws in Maryland. This work has ensured that many more people who have rehabilitated themselves have been able to move on from past mistakes and participate fully in society without the stigma of having a criminal record. When Marylanders are not barred from housing, jobs, and opportunities based on years' (or decades') old convictions, our communities and our state benefit.

Despite these changes, however, the expungement process remains opaque to many people, and burdensome to the courts and to agencies working to comply with expungement law. Many people who have become eligible to expunge past convictions, acquittals, and dismissals are simply unaware of the possibility. It is time to take another look at the expungement law as a whole, with an eye to streamlining and simplifying the process, and making expungement more available to citizens who have left their previous mistakes behind them.

SB464 would establish a commission to conduct this review. By bringing all the stakeholders in the expungement process together to discuss what is and is not working, and what might be possible, we can spur further reform of the expungement laws that will operate to the benefit of everyone.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

**John Preston Ford**

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

# **Testimony in Support of HB819\_Blaha\_SURJ.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katherine Blaha

Position: FAV

Monday, February 27, 2026



## Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice, which advocates for the reform of policies and practices that adversely affect incarcerated people's successful reintegration into society. I am a resident of Baltimore City and District 41. I am testifying in **support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland.**

Over the past decade, the General Assembly has done a great deal of important work reforming the expungement laws in Maryland. This work has ensured that many more people who have rehabilitated themselves have been able to move on from past mistakes and participate fully in society without the stigma of having a criminal record. When Marylanders are not barred from housing, jobs, and opportunities based on years (or decades) old convictions, everyone, including our communities and our state, benefits.

Despite these changes, however, the expungement process remains opaque and difficult to navigate to many people, and burdensome to the courts and to agencies working to comply with expungement law. Many people who have become eligible to expunge past convictions, acquittals, and dismissals are simply unaware of the possibility. It is past time to take another look at the expungement law as a whole, with an eye to streamlining and simplifying the process, and making expungement more readily and easily available to citizens who have left their previous mistakes behind them.

HB819 would establish a commission to conduct this review. By bringing all the stakeholders in the expungement process together to discuss what is and is not working, and what might be possible, we can spur further reform of the expungement laws that will operate to the benefit of everyone.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in **support** of **HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Katherine Blaha  
Baltimore, MD 21209  
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore

# **HB 0819- Maryland Legal Aid- Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Meaghan McDermott

Position: FAV



**House Bill 0819  
Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland  
In the Judiciary Committee  
Committee Hearing on March 3, 2026  
Position: Favorable**

Maryland Legal Aid submits its written and oral testimony on HB 0819 at the request of Delegate Stinnett.

Maryland Legal Aid urges a favorable report on House Bill 0819. The bill proposes a commission that will study best practices, collect data, and hear from impacted people, legislators, court administrators, and practitioners. The commission will make informed recommendations to create a more efficient and equitable expungement process for Marylanders.

Maryland's expungement statute needs a makeover. For decades, Maryland has expanded its expungement code during the annual legislative session. The updates have been critical, helping many people obtain a fresh start. Unfortunately, these changes have also created an overly burdensome body of law which is increasingly difficult to navigate. As a result, only [about two percent of eligible individuals](#) have obtained an expungement in Maryland. HB 0819 presents an opportunity to course correct.

Low-income people, like MLA's clients, face systemic barriers when accessing court-based relief, and expungement is no different. Many simply cannot afford to pay the filing fees associated with expungements and do not understand how to navigate the fee waiver system. Others cannot afford to pay for childcare to attend court hearings. Employers at low wage jobs are unlikely to give employees paid time off from work to consult with an attorney or attend an expungement hearing, and missing even a day's pay is not an option for people who live paycheck to paycheck. Previously incarcerated individuals may be reluctant to revisit the courtroom. The proposed commission could study these roadblocks and present solutions so that the people who need expungement the most are able to benefit from it.

Maryland's expungement code *seems* straightforward because it contains [a list of specific charges](#) that are eligible for expungement. In practice, this list is a navigational challenge. Almost every year, a bill is introduced to add a new charge to the universe of expungable offenses contained in the list. These changes are well-intentioned; indeed, MLA has supported them. However, they have had an unintended consequence; the expungement statute is incredibly confusing. For example, the offense of trespass is eligible if it occurs on posted property, but not if it occurs on private property. In another example, both felony theft and misdemeanor bad check offenses may be expunged, but a felony bad check charge may not. What is the purpose of these seemingly arbitrary distinctions? That is exactly the type

of thing the commission could study. The commission might suggest adopting a practice that other states employ using an exclusionary list of offenses that are not eligible for expungement, rather than an inclusive one like Maryland's. While this sounds like a minor change, the exclusionary list is much easier to navigate, especially for pro se litigants. Mitigating the need for yearly updates during the legislative session also promotes legislative efficiency. If the status quo continues, each year the legislature will be asked to consider one or more offenses from the [state's charging manual](#), an ever-expanding 400+-page behemoth.

Streamlining Maryland's expungement statute would alleviate resource strain for legal service providers and the court system. Because the current schema is obtuse, pro se litigants are often unsure how to file using the court provided petitions, or they are unable to navigate the court process if a hearing is required. Many of those individuals turn to a legal service provider for help. MLA represented or advised over 2,000 clients on expungements in 2025. The need for expungement assistance far outweighs the ability of MLA and other legal services providers to provide representation. Creating an expungement statute that is more accessible to pro se litigants would let MLA staff focus on the many other legal needs of our clients, like eviction prevention and child custody.

The court system also allocates significant resources to management of expungement dockets. The proposed commission will include a state court administrator who can make recommendations about the impact of expungement on the court system. Since the commission's recommendations are likely to result in more filings, it may seem counter-intuitive to suggest that the court will benefit. However, further clarity around the process should, at the very least, redirect the work from active court dockets into a more streamlined administrative process, especially when paired with the [Clean Slate legislation](#) that the Judicial Proceedings Committee is also considering.

MLA urges a favorable report on HB 0819, so Maryland's expungement statute can be studied, modernized, and centered in principles of equity and accessibility.

If you would like additional information on this bill, or the underlying issues it addresses, please contact Meaghan McDermott, Advocacy Director for Community Lawyering and Development, at [mmcdermott@mdlab.org](mailto:mmcdermott@mdlab.org).

# **HB819 - commission on expungement laws\_Badeker.pdf**

Uploaded by: Melissa Badeker

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judiciary Committee**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 43A**. **I am testifying in support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

Over the past decade, the General Assembly has done a great deal of important work reforming the expungement laws in Maryland.

This work has ensured that many more people who have rehabilitated themselves have been able to move on from past mistakes and participate fully in society without the stigma of having a criminal record. When Marylanders are not barred from housing, jobs, and opportunities based on years' (or decades') old convictions, our communities and our state benefit.

Despite these changes, however, the expungement process remains opaque to many people, and burdensome to the courts and to agencies working to comply with expungement law. Many people who have become eligible to expunge past convictions, acquittals, and dismissals are simply unaware of the possibility. It is time to take another look at the expungement law as a whole, with an eye to streamlining and simplifying the process, and making expungement more available to citizens who have left their previous mistakes behind them.

SB464 would establish a commission to conduct this review. By bringing all the stakeholders in the expungement process together to discuss what is and is not working, and what might be possible, we can spur further reform of the expungement laws that will operate to the benefit of everyone.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa Badeker  
2800 N. Calvert St, Apt T1, Baltimore MD 21218  
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

**HB 819 FAV (commission).pdf**

Uploaded by: Melissa Rothstein

Position: FAV



**Testimony in Support of House Bill 819**  
**Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland**

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Melissa Rothstein, Esq.

DATE: March 3, 2026

I am an expungement attorney for Out for Justice, Inc. (OFJ), and I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 819. HB 819 law would provide a much-needed examination of Maryland's expungement laws – creating an opportunity to efficiently correct oversights in eligibility and improve the expungement process so that it is more accessible, efficient, and equitable while still promoting public safety.

OFJ seeks to engage, educate, and empower individuals impacted by the legal system to build collective power for dismantling systemic oppression and harmful policies. The organization strives to humanize marginalized communities, prevent criminalization, reduce recidivism and promote second chances and successful reintegration through advocacy, education and supportive programming. Providing the opportunity for someone to clear their record after having served their sentence is a high priority for OFJ and an important component of successful long-term reentry.

Providing an opportunity for people with a criminal conviction to clear their criminal record is an important safety component. Once the sentence has been served, a person convicted of a crime must secure housing and employment, and should have the opportunity to support their family and contribute to their community. Without expungements, these needs and goals are denied after a basic background check that details a person's worst decisions without any recognition of maturation, rehabilitation, and reform.

Maryland law has increasingly recognized the public safety benefits of expungement. In 2015, the General Assembly passed the Second Chance Law, which provided for a limited list of misdemeanors to be eligible for shielding after three years have passed. 2015 Md. Laws ch. 313. With the Justice Reinvestment Act of 2016, the General Assembly extended this approach by

authorizing the expungement of enumerated misdemeanors after a 10-year waiting period without subsequent convictions. 2016 Md. Laws ch. 515 (codifying Crim. Proc. L. § 10-110). Since then, expungement law has incrementally expanded nearly every year. *See* 2017 Md. Laws chs. 62, 703, 801; 2018 Md. Laws chs. 12, 143; 2019 Md. Laws chs. 8, 21, 22, 599, 600; 2021 Md. Laws chs. 31, 620; 2022 Md. Laws ch. 26; 2023 Md. Laws ch. 254, 255, 683, 784; 2025 Md. Laws ch. 95.

This Legislative Session, there are at least six bills considering amendments to the expungement statute, Criminal Procedure Law, Title 10. *See* SB 315/HB 131 (adverse actions and removal from MDEC); SB 320/HB 187 (allowing no finding dispositions to Crim Proc. 10-110); SB 525/HB 169 (authorizing good cause applications for expungement); HB 113 (adding Crim. L. §§ 9-408, 9-501, 9-502 to the list of eligible charges); HB 362 (clarifying effect of expungement); HB 397 (adding Crim. L. 9-405 to the list of eligible charges); SB 483/HB 360 (Clean Slate Act); HB 824 (altering the list of eligible felonies).

The need for frequent amendments to the law is due in large part to the law's design. By listing the offenses that are eligible for expungement, rather than identifying the crimes excluded from the law, relatively minor offenses are often omitted until they are affirmatively considered for inclusion. Once considered, it can take years to correct as it competes with the many priorities of each legislative session. For example, driving on a suspended license was not eligible for expungement until 2021, after years of rejected petitions and legislative advocacy.

The complexity of the law also makes the process less accessible than warranted. Navigating eligibility often requires a lawyer for a proceeding that is most appropriate for pro se requests. Confusion in the law also results in a large number of expungement hearings, requiring significant judicial resources that would be better directed elsewhere. The piecemeal reforms needed under the current structure also expends significant legislative resources.

Convening a commission will allow for the deliberation and research needed to develop recommendations that balance the concerns of victims and law enforcement, the rights and needs of people who have served their time for an offense and the loved ones who rely on them, and the needs for judicial and legislative efficiency. A commission will ensure that the wide range of impacted stakeholders are sufficiently represented so that compromises can be reached prior to the House and Senate floors and best practices from other jurisdictions can be fully examined and considered.

The opportunity for expungement is an important mechanism for people to move beyond their mistakes and have the economic and familial stability that promotes a law-abiding life. It restores access to work, housing, education, licensing, and basic public resources after someone has served their time and successfully reintegrated into society. A commission to review the

current law and process can identify the best measures to address the current law's deficiencies, inequities, and costly hurdles.

For the foregoing reasons, Out for Justice urges the committee to issue a favorable report on of HB 819.

**HB819\_Favorable\_OPD.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sean Link

Position: FAV



**NATASHA DARTIGUE**  
PUBLIC DEFENDER

**KEITH LOTRIDGE**  
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

**HANNIBAL KEMERER**  
CHIEF OF STAFF

**ELIZABETH HILLIARD**  
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

## POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

**BILL: HB0819 – Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland**

**FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**DATE: February 27, 2026**

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The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on HB 819.

This bill creates a two-year commission of authorities to examine Maryland’s expungement laws and current expungement process, and it requires that the commission submit a report of findings to the General Assembly by the end of 2027. In particular, the bill directs the commission to investigate efficiency and equity issues, review the expungement processes that exist in comparable states, and develop an alternative statutory scheme with an eye toward streamlining processes and broadening eligibility. OPD supports this measure in the hope that it will broaden employment and housing opportunities, help individuals reintegrate into society following a conviction, and ultimately reduce recidivism.

According to data from the Clean Slate Maryland initiative, 22% of Maryland adults – over 1 million people – have some type of arrest or conviction record. Of these, fewer than half – 407,000 adults – are presently eligible for a full record clearance, and only 2% of individuals with eligible convictions currently receive expungement relief. Whether due to confusion, red tape, or lack of knowledge about the processes available, there is a clear need to determine why the process is falling short and how it could be enhanced. In addition to improving individual lives by clearing barriers to jobs, education, and housing, expungement also benefits the broader community – strengthening families, increasing economic productivity, and boosting equity by removing a source of bias, assumptions, or flat-out mistakes tied to old charges and convictions.

While the existing system already benefits many individuals, OPD supports this effort to study methods that other states have developed with an eye toward identifying best practices. The agency is uniquely positioned to hear of anecdotal issues and limitations with the present system from our clients. One area of concern is the piecemeal list of eligible offenses, which are not clearly tied to seriousness or culpability. The current expungement framework requires specific legislation to add any offense of conviction to the list of nearly 100 in Criminal Procedure Section 10-110; therefore, there are many low-level misdemeanors and even traffic offense convictions which remain ineligible solely because they have not been specifically added to the list, not due to the severity of the offense nor to any specifically-expressed intent to exclude it from expungement eligibility. To name a few surprising examples: reckless driving, keeping a disorderly house, and trespass by refusal to leave private (or public) property are all presently not expungable (though note that a conviction for trespassing on posted property *is* presently expungable). Besides creating unequal outcomes for similarly-situated offenders by leaving some convictions permanently on an individual's record, these arbitrary designations foster confusion among attorneys and defendants alike, creating an early hurdle that likely prevents many individuals from pursuing affirmative relief, despite their eligibility under law. Additionally, Maryland only allows expungement of a handful of felony convictions – no matter how much time has passed since the conviction or any intervening mitigating factors. Given the common-sense assumption that more serious offenses carry stronger prejudice in public opinion – and thus, individuals with these convictions would stand to gain exponential benefits from expungement opportunities – OPD encourages the commission to study the strategies of other jurisdictions in permitting expungement of more serious offenses and the potential benefits of further expanding eligibility in Maryland.

OPD also encourages the commission to consider amending the state's underlying expungement process to eliminate the issues caused by permitting the "obliteration" of records. Presently, Section 10-101 of the Criminal Procedure Article defines "expungement" as removal from public inspection by any of 3 possible methods: obliteration, removal to a separate secure area, or partial access. Unfortunately, multiple OPD clients have successfully expunged their records only to find that third-party background checks or federal law enforcement systems (including immigration databases) continue to incorrectly flag their prior records. Rather than accurately deducing that the matter was concluded and expunged (and thus should not be included in the report at all), these checks list "no result" for a matter, creating an incorrect impression that it remains a "pending"

matter – even in situations where a judge acquitted the individual of all counts and the court automatically expunged the charges. Impacted individuals can attempt to correct this error and remove themselves from this frustrating purgatory by obtaining a certified historical record of the case file from the court, if it has been securely preserved – however, this becomes impossible in instances of “obliteration.” The proposed commission should study methods to avoid such inaccuracies at the start and, more importantly, alternatives to the unintentionally harmful obliteration option.

Further, OPD encourages the legislature to explicitly codify a personal right allowing any individual to request certified copies of their own specific, historical court records – whether expunged or not – as a backstop remedy. Permitting this narrow access would help individuals to better understand their own records (and how those records appear to prospective employers) and protect residents whose background checks erroneously list matters as pending or as a conviction despite expungement, while still protecting them from broader unauthorized intrusions into their privacy. The commission could investigate whether courthouse clerks might be able to perform identity confirmations for these requests without burdening petitioners or judges with the time-consuming “good cause” showing and court order requirements under the current system.

While these initial areas of concern are far from exhaustive, they highlight the need for an expert commission to investigate expungement further, learn from other state systems, and expand opportunities for more Marylanders.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 819.**

**Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.  
Authored by: Sean Link, Assistant Public Defender, [sean.link@maryland.gov](mailto:sean.link@maryland.gov)**

**HB0819\_OFJ\_FAV\_Steven\_McDonald.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sekwan Merritt

Position: FAV



OUT FOR JUSTICE

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 819:**

**Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland**

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 and a member of Out For Justice.** I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 819, which establishes a Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland. **Maryland's current expungement laws make it difficult for people who have completed their sentences to move forward, creating barriers long after the system's involvement should have ended.**

My record is not eligible for expungement because of technical statutory inconsistencies. Criminal Law §5-601 includes a misdemeanor for counterfeiting or altering a prescription and is eligible for expungement, while §5-701(d)(4), which criminalizes the same conduct, is not. These charges are functionally identical yet treated differently under the statute. Because expungement eligibility has been added piece by piece without aligning laws that cover the same behavior, people like me are denied relief based solely on how a charge is labeled rather than the substance or severity of the conduct.

This isn't just confusing, it is inequitable. I have completed my sentence and worked to move forward with my life, yet my record continues to create barriers to employment, housing, and stability. The expungement process is already difficult to navigate, but when the statute itself is internally inconsistent, it becomes nearly impossible. Relief exists for some, but not for others who are similarly situated, and that inconsistency undermines both fairness and efficiency.

I'm testifying because this problem cannot be fixed through small, piecemeal changes. House Bill 819 takes that reality seriously by creating a commission to examine how Maryland's expungement laws function and who they exclude. Aligning statutes that criminalize the same conduct and basing eligibility on substance rather than technical distinctions would have made a real difference for me and many others.

Thank you to the members of the House Judiciary Committee for your consideration of this testimony and as a constituent of Vice Chair Davis in District 28, I appreciate the Committee's consideration of how this legislation would directly affect one of her residents'



districts. I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB0819 so Maryland can take a serious, thoughtful step toward an expungement system that is fair, consistent, and accessible to those who have earned the opportunity to move forward.

**HB0819\_OFJ\_FAV\_Steven\_McDonald.pdf**

Uploaded by: Steven Mcdonald

Position: FAV



OUT FOR JUSTICE

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**Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland**

March 3rd, 2026

TO: House Judiciary Committee  
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I'm testifying because this problem cannot be fixed through small, piecemeal changes. House Bill 819 takes that reality seriously by creating a commission to examine how Maryland's expungement laws function and who they exclude. Aligning statutes that criminalize the same conduct and basing eligibility on substance rather than technical distinctions would have made a real difference for me and many others.

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# **HB819 - Commission on expungement laws\_TH.pdf**

Uploaded by: Theresa M. Hoffman

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of District 43b. I **am testifying in support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

Over the past decade, the General Assembly has done a great deal of important work reforming the expungement laws in Maryland.

This work has ensured that many more people who have rehabilitated themselves have been able to move on from past mistakes and participate fully in society without the stigma of having a criminal record. When Marylanders are not barred from housing, jobs, and opportunities based on years- (or decades-) old convictions, our communities and our state benefit.

Despite these changes, however, the expungement process remains opaque to many people and burdensome to the courts and to agencies working to comply with expungement law. Many people who have become eligible to expunge past convictions, acquittals, and dismissals are simply unaware of the possibility. It is time to take another look at the expungement law as a whole, with an eye to streamlining and simplifying the process, and making expungement more available to citizens who have left their previous mistakes behind them.

HB819 would establish a commission to conduct this review. By bringing all the stakeholders in the expungement process together to discuss what is and is not working, and what might be possible, we can spur further reform of the expungement laws that will operate to the benefit of everyone.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws in Maryland.**

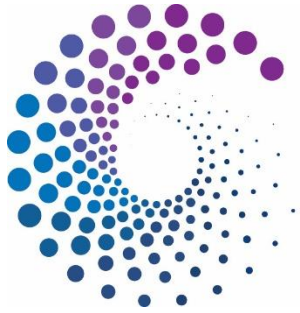
Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Theresa M. Hoffman  
803 Seaward Rd., Towson, MD 21286  
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

# **MASDP Testimony\_Written\_HB819-Expungement Commissi**

Uploaded by: Thomas Higdon

Position: FAV



# 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  
thigdon@masdp.org

**HB819\_FAV\_CFUF\_ZA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Zachary Alberts

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 819

### *Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland*

TO: Hon. Sandy Bartlett, Chair, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Zachary Alberts, Director of Advocacy

The Center for Urban Families (CFUF), a West Baltimore workforce and family-strengthening community-based organization, advocates for legislation that strengthens urban communities by helping fathers and families achieve stability and economic success.

We are here to voice our support for House Bill 819, which would establish a commission to examine Maryland's expungement laws. We work daily with the communities most impacted by the limited scope of Maryland's expungement laws. In Maryland today, there are over 1,000 different charges a person can be convicted of, yet only approximately 120 of these are eligible for expungement. This leaves countless Marylanders permanently branded by their past mistakes without any pathway to a clear record.

Research consistently shows that employment is one of the strongest predictors of successful reentry and reduced recidivism. Our current expungement laws work against these outcomes.

The arbitrary nature of what can and cannot be expunged becomes clear when examining specific cases. Here is a selection of convictions that permanently mark someone's record, impacting employment, education and housing opportunities:

- CR 5-709: Possession of inhalant for distribution [**note that possession with intent to distribute other narcotics IS expungable, but because this conviction is in 5-709 as opposed to 5-602, it was not made expungable.**]
- FL 2-406e: did unlawfully perform a marriage ceremony between (bride) and (groom) without a license.
- PS 10-104a2: did discharge fireworks without required permit.
- CR 3-806: did knowingly use a laser pointer to illuminate in a public place [an individual] in a manner that [harassed/endangered] the said [individual].
- CR 6-403: TRESPASS: PRIVATE PROPERTY [**note that trespassing under 6-402 IS expungable, but 403 is not.**]

These examples illustrate the problem with the current hodgepodge collection of expungable charges – similar (sometimes identical) offenses receive different treatment depending on where they are in the code and 100s of minor offenses levy a permanent scarlet letter while more serious ones do not.



Working with partners like the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service, the Center for Urban Families puts on quarterly expungement clinics for our members, about 50% of whom are justice impacted. For every 100 individuals that come to get their records expunged, approximately 20 are able to do so, due to the convoluted expungability list.

HB 819 would convene a group of experts from across the political, government and criminal justice system to re-examine our expungement laws, as well as those in other states, to decide whether such a low record clearance rate is what is best for Maryland.

I urge the Committee to give House Bill 819 a favorable report.

**HB 819 - MNADV - FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laure Ruth

Position: FWA



**BILL NO:** House Bill 819  
**TITLE:** **Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland**  
**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary  
**HEARING DATE:** March 3, 2026  
**POSITION:** **FAVORABLE with Amendment**

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The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that works to lead diverse community partners toward the common purpose of reducing the occurrence and impact of intimate partner violence. **MNADV urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 819.**

House Bill 819 would create a commission to examine Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the Criminal Procedure Article for the purpose of redesigning the statute for efficiency and equity. Our expungement laws have been passed, amended and otherwise developed in a piecemeal manner which has created a morass of inexplicable qualifications, disqualifications, and other complexities when anyone is trying to navigate a possible expungement. A comprehensive Commission comprised of a wide variety of stakeholders is the best way to try to cogently express our policy viewpoint, and to simplify and update our expungement laws.

For survivors of domestic violence, navigating an overly complex expungement process is more than a legal hurdle; it is a critical step toward economic independence and safety, as clearing past records can remove barriers to the stable housing and employment necessary to break the cycle of abuse. Simplifying this legal 'morass' is a matter of restorative justice for survivors, ensuring that the heavy burden of navigating bureaucratic complexities does not become an additional barrier to the stability and self-sufficiency they have or are working so hard to reclaim.

**Our amendment, which we consider friendly, asks that MNADV be added as a member, as “the Executive Director of the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence or their designee” or “the state domestic violence coalition.”**

We commend you to The Human Trafficking Prevention Project’s written testimony, which details the development of this area of law and why it needs to be reviewed.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 819 with amendment.**

---

For further information contact Laure Ruth ■ Public Policy Director ■ 301-852-3930 ■ [lruth@mnadv.org](mailto:lruth@mnadv.org)

1997 Annapolis Exchange Parkway, Suite 300 ■ Annapolis, MD 21401  
Tel: 301-429-3601 ■ E-mail: [info@mnadv.org](mailto:info@mnadv.org) ■ Website: [www.mnadv.org](http://www.mnadv.org)

# **MCPA-MSA HB 819 Commission to Examine Expungements**

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: FWA



# Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair and  
Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee  
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee  
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: March 3, 2026

RE: **HB 819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland**

POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT HB 819 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This Commission will provide an important opportunity to comprehensively review our State's expungement framework for issues of efficiency and equity, study comparable systems in other states, and develop recommendations for a more streamlined and equitable statutory scheme. Currently, Maryland's expungement laws impact public safety, victims' rights, rehabilitation, employment opportunities, and access to housing. These are all areas that deserve thorough, balanced evaluation. The creation of an expert, diverse Commission focused on these issues is a constructive step toward ensuring that our laws serve justice and promote community well-being.

At the same time, we respectfully request an amendment to ensure that the Commission includes a representative from law enforcement or a statewide law enforcement organization. Law enforcement agencies have unique insight into how expungement laws interact with public safety operations, record keeping, risk assessment, and officer safety. Including a law enforcement perspective will enhance the Commission's ability to evaluate the practical effects of existing law, and it will help ensure that any proposed statutory reforms appropriately balance rehabilitation objectives with community safety concerns. With this amendment, we believe the Commission can produce recommendations that are more comprehensive, practical, and informed by all relevant stakeholders.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT HB 819 WITH AMENDMENTS** and urge a **FAVORABLE** committee report.

# **2026\_03\_03 HB 819 - Commission to Study Expungemen**

Uploaded by: Tiffany Clark

Position: FWA

**CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI**  
*Chief Deputy Attorney General*

**LEONARD J. HOWIE III**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**CARRIE J. WILLIAMS**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**SHARON S. MERRIWEATHER**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**ZENITA WICKHAM HURLEY**  
*Deputy Attorney General*



**PETER V. BERNS**  
*General Counsel*

**CHRISTIAN E. BARRERA**  
*Chief of Staff*

**STATE OF MARYLAND**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**ANTHONY G. BROWN**  
*Attorney General*

March 3, 2026

**TO:** The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett  
Chair, Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Tiffany Clark  
Director, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

**RE:** House Bill 819 – Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland(Support with Amendment)

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The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports House Bill 819 - Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland, with the amendment described below. HB 819 establishes a Commission charged with examining Maryland's expungement laws and processes for issues of efficiency and equity, reviewing comparable states' approaches, and developing recommendations for a streamlined and broader statutory scheme.

We appreciate the intent of this legislation to conduct a comprehensive review of Maryland's expungement laws, as this is a long overdue review. Maryland's expungement framework has developed incrementally over many years, creating a complex and at times inconsistent system that can be difficult for individuals to navigate and may leave significant gaps in eligibility and access. Criminal records create substantial barriers to employment, housing, education, and economic stability that fall disproportionately on communities that have already borne the greatest burden of contact with the justice system. A Commission that brings together practitioners, researchers, workforce and reentry organizations, victim advocates, and directly impacted individuals is well-positioned to develop meaningful and workable recommendations. However, to ensure effective implementation and alignment with the Commission's mandate, we respectfully recommend the following amendment:

- 1. Add the Attorney General, or the Attorney General's designee, as a member of the Commission.** The OAG plays a central role in Maryland's criminal justice system and

has direct experience with the legal, operational, and equity dimensions of expungement law.

he OAG is committed to supporting this Commission's important work, and we believe our participation would complement the perspectives of the other members as the Commission develops its findings and recommendations. We have shared proposed amendment language with the bill sponsor and remain available to work collaboratively with the Committee to refine this legislation.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General respectfully urges the Committee to give HB 819 a favorable report with the amendment described above.

Cc: Members of the Committee

# **Letter in Opposition HB 819.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laura Wilt

Position: UNF



Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

☎ 877-VICTIM-1 (877-842-8461)

✉ mail@mdcrimevictims.org

🌐 mdcrimevictims.org

1001 Prince George's Blvd, Suite 750  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774  
301-952-0063 (Phone)  
301-952-2319 (fax)

1 North Charles Street, Suite 700  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
410-234-9885 (phone)

February 27, 2026

Re: Unfavorable to HB 819

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC), I respectfully urge an **unfavorable report on House Bill 819, if it remains as currently drafted.**

MCVRC recognizes the desire to review the expungement laws in Maryland, and how untenable the piecemeal legislation is on this issue. With nine bills related to the issue pending in front of the Judiciary Committee on March 3<sup>rd</sup> alone, the desire for review of expungement laws is obvious. The following are the changes MCVRC sees as critical to having a productive, balanced Commission that will benefit all Marylanders, not just those with criminal records:

### 1. Purpose of the Commission

The proposed language should be amended as underlined:

(f) The Commission shall:

(1) examine the expungement laws of Maryland and the current expungement process under Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the Criminal Procedure Article for issues of efficiency and equity;

(2) review comparable states' expungement laws and their processes;

and (3) develop an alternate statutory scheme that provides a streamlined process **that protects community safety** and **allows for** broader eligibility **if and as found appropriate.**

## 2. Membership on the Commission

Although the bill reads on its face to include a broad range of participants on the Commission, the overall composition of its members remains inappropriate. The current make up includes:

- 6 members who advocate on behalf of individuals with criminal records.
- Only one member of a crime victims' advocacy group that is not also required to work with those who are specifically "criminalized survivors of violence."
- Only two public safety members (president of the MSAA and Secretary of PSCS).
- For the elected members- they are appointed by their President or Speaker, therefore not including any requirement for both Democrat and Republican members.

In summary there are 16 members of the commission, out of the 12 members who are not Senators or Delegates, at least half of them are advocating for one viewpoint, and the view of public safety is left to only three members. If this was a balanced look at expungement, it would include an equal number of victim advocates who work solely on behalf of those victimized by crime.

In order for this Commission to produce practical laws that can be implemented efficiently and safely, this Commission needs to include:

- a member from the Administrative Office of the Courts
- a member from the DPSCS or law enforcement community who manages the expungement requests
- a member who has experience hiring employees into private financial or banking positions
- a member who has experience hiring employees for private companies working with sensitive populations (in home care, juvenile or senior centers, etc.)

## 3. Public Safety & Transparency Concerns

Expungement is not a minor administrative action—it removes public access to criminal records. In cases involving violence, fraud, or crimes against vulnerable populations, expungement may impact:

- Employers conducting background checks
- Licensing boards
- Volunteer organizations
- Nonprofits serving children, elderly individuals, or persons with disabilities, which will include schools, summer camps, and afterschool programs as an example

This session, Maryland is simultaneously considering policies that increase liability exposure for charitable and community organizations based on alleged failures in screening employees. Expanding expungement while increasing organizational liability risk, creates conflicting policy pressures. Organizations cannot effectively protect vulnerable populations if access to relevant criminal history is significantly restricted.

## **Conclusion**

While the creation of a Commission is a sound idea, HB 819 in its current form will lead to biased outcomes that perpetuate the division and gridlock we are already seeing. The proposed membership is heavily weighted toward advocates for individuals with criminal records, with only token representation of opposing viewpoints. Such imbalance silences dissenting voices and prevents meaningful dialogue. As written, the Commission is structured to dismiss perspectives that do not align with its dominant position.

For these reasons, the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center respectfully requests an **unfavorable report** on HB 819.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Maryland's justice system.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Corbett Wilt, Senior Attorney  
Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center, Inc.

# **HB 819\_SB 464\_ Commission to Examine the Expungem**

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

**HB 819/SB 464:** Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Judiciary Committee & Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **OPPOSE HB 819/SB 464**, *Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland*.

While framed as a study, this Commission—stacked with advocates for broader expungement (including the Public Defender, reentry groups, and individuals ineligible under existing law)—is clearly designed to push for significant expansions, potentially making more serious convictions, including felonies and certain misdemeanors, easier to erase from public records.

Maryland's expungement laws already provide meaningful second-chance opportunities for non-convictions, certain low-level misdemeanors, and specific cases (e.g., old cannabis possession) through careful, petition-based processes with judicial oversight. Creating a formal commission to recommend broader eligibility and streamlining will lead to rushed, overly permissive changes that undermine public safety, victim rights, and transparency. **Employers, schools, landlords, licensing boards, and communities rely on accessible criminal history information for informed decisions—especially in safety-sensitive roles. Automatically or more broadly sealing records could hide relevant details, reduce deterrence, and erode accountability without sufficient safeguards.**

Rather than forming a commission likely to advocate for weakening current limits, the General Assembly should focus on enforcing and refining existing laws to balance rehabilitation with protection of the public. **This bill sets the stage for dangerous expansions without demonstrated need or broad consensus.**

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to **vote against HB 819/SB 464** and oppose the creation of this commission.

Thank you for your attention to this critical public safety and criminal justice matter.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals