

HB0824_FAV_OFJ.pdf

Uploaded by: Christopher Dews

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 824:

Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substances

TO: Hon. Sandy Bartlett, Chair, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Christopher Dews, Out for Justice

DATE: March 3rd, 2026

[USE ANY OF THESE AS YOU SEE FIT. ADD OR SUBTRACT WHAT YOU PLEASE.]

Out for Justice, Inc. (OFJ) is an organization comprised of individuals directly and indirectly impacted by the criminal legal system. We advocate for reforming policies and practices that adversely affect successful reintegration into society. We strongly support House Bill 824: Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substances, which adds a felony CDS Distribution Charges under §5-602(A) to the expungement list under Criminal Procedure §10-110.

There is an inconsistency in the current law that has affected most of our 100+ members throughout Maryland regarding expungements for Possession with Intent to distribute (PWID) and CDS Distribution. Under current law, possession with intent to distribute a controlled dangerous substance under § 5-602 is already eligible for expungement. So, if you are in possession of the substance and are arrested, you can have the charge expunged. However, if you hand the substance to another person, you are not eligible for expungement. This is a very strange inconsistency in the code, which this bill seeks to resolve by saying that both the intent and the distribution be eligible for expungement after the completion of the sentence and the required waiting period of seven (7) years.

Most of our members were impacted by the War on Drugs, which started as a war on poverty for lower-income African Americans and subsequently put millions of Americans into the criminal justice system. This bill does not excuse their participation in CDS Distribution but ensures they can properly re-enter society and provide for their families after they have served their time.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

HB824 - Criminal Procedure -- altering list of fel

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 HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Imagine there are two people, J and K. J has a bag full of drugs and plans to sell them. J's hands are full, and they ask K to take a portion out and hand it to a customer. Both J and K can be charged with drug offenses. Both are charged and convicted, and both complete their sentence. As the law currently stands, J's crime – possession of controlled substances with the intent to distribute – is eligible for expungement. However, K's crime - distribution of controlled dangerous substances - is not eligible for expungement. These two crimes carry the same maximum penalty, and law enforcement considers both crimes to be "drug-dealing" offenses. This bill would level the playing field by making distribution expungeable under the same conditions that possession with intent to distribute is. J and K, convicted of nearly the same crime, should be eligible for expungement to the same degree.

Expungement can be life-altering, and it is also rare. Only 9% of crimes are eligible for expungement. This bill would not change the fact that distribution of drugs is still a crime. Once a person is convicted of drug distribution, they will still have to serve their complete sentence. This bill would not change the penalties. What the bill would do is ensure that a person who has completed their sentence for this particular crime will not have to continue suffering undue consequences for the remainder of their life. Without expungement, a person who was convicted of drug distribution will always have that conviction on their criminal record. They cannot access housing, job interviews, financial credit, or occupational licensing in many circumstances. If expungement were available to that person, however, what would distinguish them from other job candidates or housing applicants would be their own hard work and evidence of sound character—not an old conviction for which they have already completed their sentence.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

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

HPP Testimony- HB 824 (FAV).pdf

Uploaded by: Jessica Emerson

Position: FAV

Testimony of the Human Trafficking Prevention Project

BILL NO:	House Bill 824
TITLE:	Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance
COMMITTEE:	Judiciary
HEARING DATE:	March 3, 2026
POSITION:	FAVORABLE

[The Human Trafficking Prevention Project](#) (“HTPP”) is dedicated to ending the criminalization of sex workers, survivors of human trafficking, and those populations put at highest risk of exploitation 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 824.**

House Bill 824 will add a conviction for distributing or dispensing a controlled dangerous substance (§ 5–602(a)(1)) to the list of felony convictions eligible under MD. CRIM. PRO. § 10-110. At the HTPP, we frequently work with survivors of human trafficking who have been forced to commit criminal acts by their traffickers, as well as survivors of other types of gender-based violence who have been forced to do the same. One of the most common ways these perpetrators insulate themselves against detection by law enforcement is by distributing drugs for them, which results in a conviction for distributing or dispensing a controlled dangerous substance, which is not currently eligible for expungement.

The anti-trafficking movement is far more frequently recognizing the overlap between sex and labor trafficking, whereby victims may be exploited for sex but also forced to commit other forms of labor including forced drug sales. In a study of labor trafficking victims who had experienced forced criminality before the age of 22, [the most common underlying crime was drug distribution](#). In the infamous [Victor Rax case](#), Rax, a trusted member of the immigrant community in which he lived, would groom his male victims through excessive gifts and acts of affection with the initial goal of getting his victims to deal drugs for him. He used that money to maintain several vacant properties where he would take his victims and sexually assault them. Many of his victims said that one of the major reasons they delayed reporting what Rax had done to them is that they feared being arrested. More specifically, they thought police would see them first as drug dealers, not abuse victims. This story illustrates the power of forced criminality.

House Bill 824 would provide criminalized survivors with an opportunity to petition the court for expungement of this particular conviction, as long as they are able to meet the other criteria of the expungement statute such as the waiting period and the subsequent conviction rule. For criminalized survivors, the inclusion of this incredibly stigmatizing conviction would be 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 824 and respectfully urges a favorable report.**

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

Survival Should Not Be Criminalized.

HB824 - 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 HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**

Imagine there are two people, J and K. J has a bag full of drugs and plans to sell them. J's hands are full, and they ask K to take a portion out and hand it to a customer. Both J and K can be charged with drug offenses. Both are charged and convicted, and both complete their sentence. As the law currently stands, J's crime – possession of controlled substances with the intent to distribute – is eligible for expungement. However, K's crime - distribution of controlled dangerous substances - is not eligible for expungement. These two crimes carry the same maximum penalty, and law enforcement considers both crimes to be “drug-dealing” offenses. This bill would level the playing field by making distribution expungeable under the same conditions that possession with intent to distribute is. J and K, convicted of nearly the same crime, should be eligible for expungement to the same degree.

Expungement can be life-altering, and it is also rare. Only 9% of crimes are eligible for expungement. This bill would not change the fact that distribution of drugs is still a crime. Once a person is convicted of drug distribution, they will still have to serve their complete sentence. This bill would not change the penalties. What the bill would do is ensure that a person who has completed their sentence for this particular crime will not have to continue suffering undue consequences for the remainder of their life. Without expungement, a person who was convicted of drug distribution will always have that conviction on their criminal record. They cannot access housing, job interviews, financial credit, or occupational licensing in many circumstances. If expungement were available to that person, however, what would distinguish them from other job candidates or housing applicants would be their own hard work and evidence of sound character—not an old conviction for which they have already completed their sentence.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Preston Ford

529 S East Ave, Baltimore, MD 21224

Testimony in Support of HB0824_Blaha_SURJ.pdf

Uploaded by: Katherine Blaha

Position: FAV

Friday, 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 HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**

Criminal record expungement can be positively life-altering—even life-saving—and in Maryland, it is also rare. Only 9% of crimes are eligible for expungement, and 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.

Lack of access to expungement has potentially devastating and lifelong impacts for previously convicted individuals. Having a criminal record can lead to people in effect being punished for their offenses long after they've served their debt to society; previously convicted individuals with criminal records can have difficulty getting employment, housing, certifications and licenses, and access to other resources that are critically necessary to re-integrate into their communities and be a full-fledged member of society. Those who have met the requirements of their sentence including probation, parole, fines, and community service should have the opportunity to full rejoin society and move on with their lives, free of the stigma of past convictions.

HB0824 offers a seemingly minor yet still meaningful and constructive step toward increasing the fairness, equitability, and restorative potential of Maryland criminal law.

Under Maryland law, possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute is an expungable offense. However, distribution of a controlled substance is **not** currently an expungable offense. It simply does not make sense that these two highly similar offenses are treated so differently—and with such serious long-term consequences in the case of distribution charges—under Maryland law. If lawmakers have determined that individuals previously convicted with intent to distribute should have access to expungement, then so should individuals previously convicted with distribution. This bill proposes making intent to distribute a controlled substance an expungable crime.

If passed, HB0824 will change nothing else about how these two charges are treated under Maryland law. Both of these charges would still be considered crimes. Once a person is convicted of drug distribution, they will still have to serve their complete sentence. This bill would not change the penalties for these offenses. What the bill would do is simply ensure that a person who has completed their sentence for this particular crime will not have to continue suffering undue consequences for the remainder of their life.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

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

HB824 - Criminal Procedure -- altering list of fel

Uploaded by: Lindsay Keipper

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 **D46**, and **I am testifying in support of HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Imagine there are two people, J and K. J has a bag full of drugs and plans to sell them. J's hands are full, and they ask K to take a portion out and hand it to a customer. Both J and K can be charged with drug offenses. Both are charged and convicted, and both complete their sentence. As the law currently stands, J's crime – possession of controlled substances with the intent to distribute – is eligible for expungement. However, K's crime - distribution of controlled dangerous substances - is not eligible for expungement. These two crimes carry the same maximum penalty, and law enforcement considers both crimes to be “drug-dealing” offenses. This bill would level the playing field by making distribution expungeable under the same conditions that possession with intent to distribute is. J and K, convicted of nearly the same crime, should be eligible for expungement to the same degree.

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It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0824.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Keipper

2425 Fleet St.

Baltimore, MD

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

HB 0824- Maryland Legal Aid- Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Meaghan McDermott

Position: FAV



House Bill 0824
**Criminal Procedure – Expungement – Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous
Substance**
In the Judiciary Committee
Committee Hearing on March 3, 2026
Position: Favorable

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its testimony on HB 0824 at the request of Delegate Stinnett.

MLA is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to the State’s low-income and vulnerable residents. Our twelve offices serve residents in each of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions and handle a wide range of civil legal matters including criminal record expungement and workers’ rights.

MLA supports HB 0824. HB 0824 legalizes expungement of distribution convictions. If passed into law, distribution convictions could be expunged after seven years, if the petitioner did not reoffend during that time. This is the same criteria required for the felony offenses that are already eligible for expungement in Maryland. Felony convictions negatively impact an individual’s prospects long after they have repaid their debt to society, by impacting their ability to obtain housing and employment.

HB 0824 would make Maryland’s expungement statute more equitable by allowing expungement of an offense that disproportionately impacts low-income Black communities. Maryland has the nation’s highest racial incarceration gap. Last year, Black Marylanders made up only 30 percent of the State’s overall population, but 71 percent of the prison population.¹ People of color face discriminatorily high arrest, conviction, and incarceration rates as it relates to the use, possession, and sale of controlled substances.² Expanding Maryland’s expungement statute to include distribution charges is a small step towards addressing these discriminatory impacts.

MLA strongly urges a favorable report on HB 0824 to allow for the expungement of distribution convictions.

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@mdlaborg.org.

¹ Prison Legal News, *Maryland Targets Highest-in-Nation Racial Incarceration Gap*, Human Rights Defense Center, May 1, 2025, <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2025/may/1/maryland-targets-highest-nation-racial-incarceration-gap/>.

² Center for Policing Equity. (April 2024). *Redesigning Public Safety – Substance Use* at 3. <https://policingequity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CPE-WhitePaper-SubstanceUse.p>

HB824 - Criminal Procedure_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 **43A. I am testifying in support of HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Imagine there are two people, J and K. J has a bag full of drugs and plans to sell them. J's hands are full, and they ask K to take a portion out and hand it to a customer. Both J and K can be charged with drug offenses. Both are charged and convicted, and both complete their sentence. As the law currently stands, J's crime – possession of controlled substances with the intent to distribute – is eligible for expungement. However, K's crime - distribution of controlled dangerous substances - is not eligible for expungement. These two crimes carry the same maximum penalty, and law enforcement considers both crimes to be “drug-dealing” offenses. This bill would level the playing field by making distribution expungeable under the same conditions that possession with intent to distribute is. J and K, convicted of nearly the same crime, should be eligible for expungement to the same degree.

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It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**

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

HB824_ACLUMD_FAV_.pdf

Uploaded by: Olivia Spaccasi

Position: FAV



Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee

March 3, 2026

HB 824 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance

FAVORABLE

OLIVIA SPACCASI
PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM
ASSOCIATE

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
OF MARYLAND

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WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS
COREY STOTTLEMYER
PRESIDENT

DANA VICKERS SHELLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN
GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 824 which seeks to amend to § 10-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article to authorize a person to file a petition for expungement of a felony conviction under § 5-602(a) of the Criminal Law Article (distributing or dispensing a controlled dangerous substance). HB 824 is an important step in the right direction towards ensuring Marylander's who have served their time can reenter the community and rebuild their lives with greater ease.

Studies routinely show that employment opportunities can reduce recidivism rates.¹ Yet, for far too many Marylanders, a criminal record—regardless of how minor the offense can be a bar to opportunities for success. The collateral consequences reach far beyond employment—a criminal record may compromise one's eligibility for tuition assistance and stable housing. Moreover, these collateral consequences are particularly stark for communities of color.

Criminal records exclude individuals from employment, educational opportunities, public benefits, and stable housing.

The existence of a criminal record can and does create a barrier to employment for many Marylanders. Over 80 percent of U.S. employers perform criminal background checks on prospective employees.²

¹ Nally, Lockwood, Taiping, and Knutson, *The Post-Release Employment and Recidivism Among Different Types of Offenders With A Different Level of Education: A 5-Year Follow-Up Study in Indiana* (noting that recidivist offenders were likely to be unemployed or under-educated)

² Burke, M.E., 2004 *Reference and Background Checking Survey Report: A Study by the Society for Human Resource Management, Alexandria, Va.: Society for Human Resource Management*, 2006.



AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
FOUNDATION

Maryland

Criminal convictions also serve to exclude persons from educational opportunities. A recent study found that a majority (66%) of colleges collect criminal justice information as part of the admissions process.³

A criminal conviction also hinders an individual's access to stable housing and a range of public benefits, placing them at greater risk for homelessness and housing instability.⁴

Successful reentry is dependent on access to employment, housing, skill development (including access to licensing), among other factors. Expungement reduces reentry challenges caused by lack of access to these factors, lowering recidivism and benefiting public safety.⁵

Criminal convictions disparately disadvantage individuals, families, and communities of color.

The over-criminalization of communities of color – largely due to the ‘war on drugs’—has produced the startling result that one in three Black men born today can expect to go to prison in their lifetime, compared with one in six Latino men, and one in seventeen White men.⁶ In addition to facing higher imprisonment rates, Black people, once arrested, are more likely to

³ Center for Community Alternatives—Innovative Solutions for Justice, *The Use of Criminal Records in College Admissions, Reconsidered* (available at <http://www.communityalternatives.org/pdf/Reconsidered-criminal-hist-recs-in-college-admissions.pdf>).

⁴ https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/AG-2020/6-07_Housing-Access-for-People-with-Criminal-Records.pdf

⁵ RTI International. “Reentry and Housing Stability: Final Report.” HHS ASPE OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, DISABILITY, AND AGING POLICY, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Dec. 2024, aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/49f0895779c6b984a9261c96f747e707/reentry-housing-stability.pdf; “Successful Reentry: A Community-Level Analysis.” The Harvard University Institute of Politics Criminal Justice, The Harvard University Institute of Politics Criminal Justice Policy Group, Dec. 2019, iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/2023-02/IOP_Policy_Program_2019_Reentry_Policy.pdf.

⁶ <https://www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/mass-incarceration/mass-incarceration-animated-series>



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Maryland

be convicted, and once convicted, are more likely to face longer sentences than their White counterparts.⁷

With higher conviction rates, persons of color necessarily bear the brunt of collateral consequences stemming from criminal convictions. Exclusion from the job market, stable housing, and countless other crucial services perpetuates the cycle of imprisonment plaguing communities of color—without gainful employment and stable housing, individuals are forced to return to livelihoods of criminality.

A person should not be continually defined nor punished for their worst day. Expanding expungement opportunities will help empower more individuals to re-enter society and participate meaningfully in the workforce.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 824.

⁷ Ibid.

HB0824_OFJ_FAV_Steven_McDonald.pdf

Uploaded by: Sekwan Merritt

Position: FAV



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 824:

Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance

March 3rd, 2026

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Steven McDonald

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

My name is Steven McDonald. I live in District 28 in Charles County. I'm a Master Plumber with Local 5 Plumbers and Gasfitters and a member of Out for Justice. **I write in support of House Bill 824. Also as a constituent of Vice Chair Davis, I appreciate your consideration of this bill would directly affect me as a District 28 resident.**

HB0824 amends Criminal Procedure §10-110(a)(2) to include convictions under Criminal Law §5-602(a) on the list of felony offenses eligible for expungement. Right now, §5-602(a), which covers distribution or dispensing of a controlled dangerous substance, is not consistently treated the same as similar drug offenses under the expungement statute.

Maryland law already allows expungement eligibility for certain prescription related offenses. Criminal Law §5-601 covers obtaining a controlled dangerous substance by fraud or altering a prescription. Criminal Law §8-610 covers counterfeiting a prescription. Those offenses can be expungeable. **But people like myself, charged under a different subsection, including §5-602(a), are excluded even when the conduct is tied to addiction and recovery. The difference is the statutory label, not necessarily the risk to public safety.**

My conviction came from a prescription opioid addiction that started after a serious spine injury when I was 18. I was prescribed OxyContin and was not educated about addiction risks. I developed a dependency that lasted several years and led to my only criminal conviction.

I have now been clean for 10 years. I was released in 2014. I completed a five year apprenticeship with Local 5 Plumbers and Gasfitters. I earned multiple licenses and passed my Master Plumber exam. All as the sole provider for my wife and three children.

Even with those qualifications, my record still blocks opportunity. Over 70% of Local 5 union jobs involve government contracts or sites that require background clearance. When background checks are run, I lose placements or get laid off. That affects my income and



my ability to support my family. I've also had trouble securing stable housing because of my record.

HB0824 does not guarantee expungement. It allows a person to file a petition, with a judge still reviewing the case. Waiting periods still apply and public safety is still considered. This bill simply makes someone convicted under §5-602(a) eligible to ask for relief under Criminal Procedure §10-110(a)(2).

I am not asking for special treatment. I'm asking for access to the same structured judicial review process afforded to others whose offenses are already recognized as expungeable. **I have taken responsibility, rebuilt my career, maintained long term recovery, and serve my community as a licensed tradesman. I am only asking for access to the same process others already have.**

I respectfully ask for a favorable report on House Bill 824.

Thank you for your time.

HB0824_OFJ_FAV_Steven_McDonald.pdf

Uploaded by: Steven Mcdonald

Position: FAV



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 824:

Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance

March 3rd, 2026

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Steven McDonald

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My name is Steven McDonald. I live in District 28 in Charles County. I'm a Master Plumber with Local 5 Plumbers and Gasfitters and a member of Out for Justice. **I write in support of House Bill 824. Also as a constituent of Vice Chair Davis, I appreciate your consideration of this bill would directly affect me as a District 28 resident.**

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Thank you for your time.

HB824 - Criminal Procedure -- altering list of fel

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 HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Imagine there are two people, J and K. J has a bag full of drugs and plans to sell them. J's hands are full, and they ask K to take a portion out and hand it to a customer. Both J and K can be charged with drug offenses. Both are charged and convicted, and both complete their sentence. As the law currently stands, J's crime – possession of controlled substances with the intent to distribute – is eligible for expungement. However, K's crime – distribution of controlled dangerous substances – is not eligible for expungement. These two crimes carry the same maximum penalty, and law enforcement considers both crimes to be “drug-dealing” offenses. This bill would level the playing field by making distribution expungeable under the same conditions that possession with intent to distribute is. J and K, convicted of nearly the same crime, should be eligible for expungement to the same degree.

Expungement can be life-altering, and it is also rare. Only 9% of crimes are eligible for expungement. This bill would not change the fact that distribution of drugs is still a crime. Once a person is convicted of drug distribution, they will still have to serve their complete sentence. This bill would not change the penalties. What the bill would do is ensure that a person who has completed their sentence for this particular crime will not have to continue suffering undue consequences for the remainder of their life. Without expungement, a person who was convicted of drug distribution will always have that conviction on their criminal record. They cannot access housing, job interviews, financial credit, or occupational licensing in many circumstances. If expungement were available to that person, however, what would distinguish them from other job candidates or housing applicants would be their own hard work and evidence of sound character—not an old conviction for which they have completed their sentence.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

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

HB0824_FAV_TrinaSelden.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Trina Selden

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 824:

Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substances

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Trina Selden

- **INTRODUCTION**
 - “I am Trina Selden, founder and executive director of Out for Justice.”
 - I founded the organization in 2006 to assist people like me who are affected by the criminal legal system in navigating it and reacclimating to society upon release.
- **MY HISTORY**
 - 26 years ago, I received a distribution charge that I have never been able to walk away from. This led to crippling barriers to employment and housing upon release.
 - In response, I worked diligently with the community on legislation to ban the box on employment applications and was ecstatic to see that reform reach statewide.
 - Had I not created Out for Justice, I would not be allowed to work a minimum wage job despite having a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice.
- **OUT FOR JUSTICE MEMBERS**
 - Since then, I have worked with hundreds of returning citizens in similar situations, and Out for Justice has been at the forefront of policy reform to address these issues.
 - Moreover, I have hired a core team of returning citizens facing similar barriers, and though I am proud of my work, I can’t hire everyone.
- **HOW THE BILL FIXES THIS**
 - House Bill 824 would allow me to have my record expunged after nearly three decades of being denied access to what every Marylander deserves: a chance to move forward.
- **CLOSING**
 - I urge a favorable report.

HB362_Fav Amend_OPD.pdf

Uploaded by: Sean Link

Position: FWA



NATASHA DARTIGUE
PUBLIC DEFENDER

KEITH LOTRIDGE
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

HANNIBAL KEMERER
CHIEF OF STAFF

ELIZABETH HILLIARD
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILLS:

- **HB0113 – Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Resisting Arrest and Making a False Statement to a Law Enforcement Officer;**
- **HB0362 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement – Effect;**
- **HB0397 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Failure to Obey a Court Order to Report to Confinement;**
- **HB0824 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance**

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

DATE: February 27, 2026

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on the four above-listed bills, all of which address expungement.

Expungement broadens opportunities for education, employment, licensing, and housing, which helps individuals reintegrate into society and ultimately reduces recidivism. It also reduces the systemic barriers that arise from racial disparities in the criminal legal system and perpetuate cycles of poverty and marginalization. However, ambiguity over the legislative intent and scope of Maryland’s expungement laws currently limits its impact, especially regarding federal benefit eligibility. OPD supports these four measures, which will clarify the effect of expungement and provide more individuals with an opportunity to move beyond a conviction after they have served their time and proven themselves rehabilitated.

For over a decade, Maryland law has recognized the benefits to individuals and society at large in allowing people to clear the stigma of a criminal charge and conviction off their record. According to 2022 data in a federally-funded study by SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, over 25% of Maryland adults – nearly 1.7 million people – had some type

of arrest or conviction record. However, according to the Clean Slate Maryland coalition, only 407,000 adults are presently eligible for a full record clearance. These numbers highlight that – while the existing system benefits many individuals – room for growth remains. The current expungement framework has been assembled in piecemeal fashion, requiring specific legislation like these bills to deem an offense eligible for expungement consideration. That list of eligible offenses in Criminal Procedure Section 10-110 currently lacks many low-level and non-violent offenses – not because they were specifically deemed inappropriate, but simply because they have not been specifically added to the list. These arbitrary designations have left holes in the process, creating unequal outcomes for similarly-situated offenders by expunging some convictions while leaving others permanently on an individual’s record.

Three bills before this committee (HB 113, HB 397, and HB 824) are reasonable, if incremental, expansions to the list of eligible offenses. In total, these bills would add five (5) subsections of criminal code violations to the eligible convictions in Section 10-110: Resisting Arrest, False Statement (two separate sections – statements made to an officer and when under arrest; the related crime of making a false report to a public official is already expungable), Failure to Obey Court Order to Report to Place of Confinement, and Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance. All but one of these are misdemeanor offenses; none of them are crimes of violence under state law. To be clear, these bills will not create a tidal wave of expungement petitions, nor will they let anyone avoid accountability. All of the standard requirements will still apply – each petitioner must not only have completed their full sentence of incarceration, parole, and probation; they must also demonstrate that they have remained free of other ineligibility triggers (including new convictions) wait for an additional period of years – longer for some offenses than others.

The only felony offense in this group is Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance under 5-602(a). HB 824 remedies a discrepancy in the law that presently allows individuals to expunge a conviction for Possession with Intent to Distribute under 5-602 but *denies* all expungement relief for Distribution under the same statute. It makes little sense to continue differentiating the rights available to someone convicted of possession and apparent intent – but not the completed act – covered by a single non-violent statute. And by cabining eligibility to 5-602, this bill sweeps in only the least culpable set of offenders; convictions for more aggravated offenses in the code – such as illegal manufacturing of CDS, larger-scale drug trafficking, and distribution with a nexus to a firearm – are all not included and will remain unexpungable. It is also notable that, in recognition of its

felony status, individuals must demonstrate at least seven years of perfect behavior (in addition to the years of probation and any incarceration included in the original sentence) before becoming expungement eligible; this is longer than the 5-year waiting period for most misdemeanor offenses. In my experience as a public defender, individuals who are convicted under 5-602 are typically trapped in their own cycle of dependence and desperation, and this conviction stemmed from sharing or low-level dealing to support that addiction. These are individuals who need treatment and resources, and who have much to offer the community, especially once they have received help. However, a felony conviction carries strong prejudice in public opinion, making their re-entry into the community especially taxing as they navigate barriers to employment, licensing, and housing. Someone who has completed their sentence, been rehabilitated, and remained expungement eligible for 7 additional years has clearly demonstrated their commitment to changed behavior – so this bill recognizes their humanity and rewards their clean break from the past.

The clarifying language proposed in HB 362 is distinct from the other expungement bills before this Committee – but no less critical. Confoundingly, the Maryland Code currently lays out multiple sections of procedure and eligibility regulations without ever explicitly defining the intended effect of expunging a state charge. This has left individuals, businesses, state agencies, courts, and even the federal government in some confusion over the precise benefit of an expungement under Maryland law – is it a shield or an eraser? Due to this ambiguity, an expunged Maryland offense is still regularly interpreted as a “conviction” in federal law contexts, constraining thousands of Maryland residents’ eligibility for federal employment, licenses, and benefits. By enacting this bill’s language, the General Assembly will affirm the liberty interest that it conveys upon an individual through expungement. Expungement was intended not only as a recordkeeping function (shielding records from most public view), but as a full erasure of the underlying arrest, charge, and/or conviction for all relevant purposes. This bill clears up lingering questions over the legislative intent and scope of expungement to ensure that Marylanders receive the full benefits of this vital legal remedy.

While OPD supports all four of these bills on their own terms, the agency advocates for 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 (which is unaffected by HB 169) defines “expungement” as removal from public inspection by any of 3 possible methods: obliteration, removal to a separate secure area, or partial access. Unfortunately, after expungement under the current system, individuals are still flagged by third-party background

checks or federal law enforcement systems (including immigration databases) with unfortunate regularity – these reports often list the case and charges as “no result,” and create an incorrect impression that it remains a pending matter, rather than accurately deducing that the matter was concluded and expunged (and thus should not be included in the report at all). Impacted individuals can attempt to correct this error and remove themselves from this frustrating purgatory by obtaining a certified record of the case file from the court – however, this becomes impossible in instances of “obliteration.” Until the legislature ends this unintentionally damaging obliteration option, expanding the availability of expungement will also expand the number of individuals who are harmed by having their court records obliterated, rather than sealed and removed from public access.

Additionally, OPD encourages the legislature to explicitly codify a regulation allowing any defendant to make a request to courthouse clerks for certified copies of court records in a case charged against him or her, even after expungement, as backstop protection for residents trying to prove that status in the face of incorrect reporting. This proposal can still protect individuals from unauthorized intrusions into their privacy, without burdening petitioners or judges with the present requirements for a separate judicial hearing, “good cause” showing, and court order to receive one’s own records.

*

*

*

These four bills offer clarity of purpose and some important, if modest, expansions to Maryland’s expungement scheme. In addition to improving lives by clearing barriers to jobs, education, housing, and benefits, these expungement improvements will also benefit the broader community – strengthening families, increasing economic productivity, and boosting equity by removing a source of biased assumptions tied to old convictions. These bills offer a much-deserved return for those who have repaid their debt to society and earned a second chance.

For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report with amendments on House Bill 113, House Bill 362, House Bill 397, and House Bill 824.

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

Unfavorable against HB 824.pdf

Uploaded by: Joanna Mupanduki

Position: UNF



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

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
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301-952-0063 (Phone)
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1 North Charles Street, Suite 700
Baltimore, MD 21201
410-234-9885 (phone)

February 27, 2026

RE: UNFAVORABLE TO HOUSE BILL 697

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC), I write in opposition to House Bill 824.

HB 824 would amend Criminal Procedure § 10–110 to make individuals convicted under Criminal Law § 5–602(a) eligible for expungement. That statute prohibits both (1) the distribution or dispensing of a controlled dangerous substance and (2) possession of a controlled dangerous substance in quantities that indicate an intent to distribute. These are not low-level or technical offenses. They are serious felony crimes that involve supplying illegal drugs to others or maintaining quantities intended for distribution. **Conduct that directly fuels addiction, overdose deaths, exploitation, and violence in Maryland's communities.**

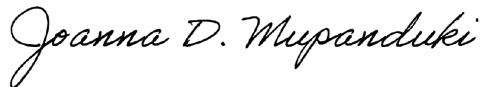
Drug distribution offenses frequently exist at the center of broader criminal activity and often produce identifiable victims, including families devastated by fatal overdoses, individuals coerced into drug use, and communities destabilized by trafficking networks. Allowing expungement of these convictions risks erasing records of conduct that caused profound and lasting harm, undermining both transparency and accountability.

Maryland has already significantly expanded expungement eligibility in recent years, making relief widely available for numerous offenses and providing meaningful opportunities for individuals to move forward after completing their sentences. Before further expanding expungement to include felony drug distribution and possession with intent to distribute, the General Assembly should carefully consider the public safety implications and the impact on victims and the greater community of Maryland citizens who rely on accurate criminal records for their safety, peace of mind, and informed decision-making.

While rehabilitation is an important goal, it must be balanced with the seriousness of the underlying conduct and rehabilitation includes the ability to hold oneself accountable and take responsibility everyday for what they have done. Expanding expungement to cover felony drug distribution offenses diminishes the gravity of crimes that continue to inflict severe harm on individuals, families, and communities across Maryland.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 824.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanna D. Mupanduki". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Joanna D. Mupanduki, Esq.
Deputy Director
Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center, Inc.

HB 824 - unfavorable - exp dist.pdf

Uploaded by: Kirsten Brown

Position: UNF

Ivan Bates
President



Kirsten N. Brown
Executive Director

Maryland State's Attorneys' Association
3300 North Ridge Road, Suite 185
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043
kbrown@mdsaa.org ~ 301-748-1312

Date: February 27, 2026

Bill Number: HB 824

Position: Unfavorable

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE MARYLAND STATE'S ATTORNEYS'
ASSOCIATION IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 824
CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – EXPUNGEMENT- CONVICTION OF DISTRIBUTION OF
CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE

The Maryland States Attorneys Association is opposed to House Bill 824 Criminal Procedure-Expungement- Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance and asks for an unfavorable report.

In 2016, the Maryland Legislature embarked on a mission and project which became the Justice Reinvestment Act. Included within this extensive package aimed at addressing the criminal justice system, as it existed, was a major change and expansion of expungement availability for those intent on first paying their debt to society but then intent on making a future for themselves without the constraint of a criminal record. In doing so, however, the Legislature was cognizant of and created statutes which still required some accountability and protection of society. In 2023 the General Assembly lowered the waiting period even more than previously established. Despite the painstaking efforts of the General Assembly to carefully consider all criminal offenses and include those by which it has been determined deserve consideration for expungement, there have been a few occasions where additional eligible offenses have been added.

The addition of Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance as an offense eligible for expungement, however, should not occur. This crime, in its' most simple terms, is being a drug dealer. One who engages in this act or set of acts has made the affirmative decision to distribute a controlled dangerous substance in exchange for money. The act or acts of that person provides a grave amount of danger to those who buy the drugs from them or to all to whom the drugs are further distributed. It is an unquestionable truth that these acts cause the deaths of many individuals who then use those drugs. Drug dealing is also an inherently dangerous crime by its' very act. Many die or are gravely injured in the battles between drug dealers. Innocent law abiding citizens and law enforcement are endangered by the acts of drug

dealers. Without the act of distribution of drugs there would be no deaths from the use or contested “turf” wars. Expungement is available for the Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and the Association accepts this as a circumstance where an individual can demonstrate that they have earned an opportunity to move on with their life and career without the hindrance of the conviction. Dealing that drug is very different. The public and law enforcement authorities deserve to know about the prior drug dealing choices of an individual when they may interact with that person in the future. Those who choose to deal drugs should remain accountable for that decision.

There is an extensive list of crimes which can be expunged even from guilty findings. This should not be included within them.

MSAA requests an unfavorable report for HB 824.

MCPA-MSA HB 824 Expungement - Distro of Controlled

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: UNF



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 824 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of
Controlled Dangerous Substance**

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE HB 824**. This bill would alter Maryland's expungement statute to allow individuals convicted of distributing or dispensing a controlled dangerous substance to be eligible for expungement. This proposal expands the list of felony convictions that may be cleared from a person's record and, in doing so, risks undermining the deterrent effect of the law and public safety. Distribution and dispensing offenses involve the unlawful trafficking of dangerous drugs that are frequently linked with addiction, violence, organized criminal activity, and community harm. Making these serious felony convictions eligible for expungement could weaken accountability and reduce transparency in criminal histories that are relevant to risk assessment, law enforcement investigations, and public safety decisions.

Expungement removes a record from routine background checks and public access, which may be appropriate in limited cases for minor offenses after a long period of demonstrated rehabilitation. But, extending that benefit to drug distribution offenses shifts Maryland's expungement policy into territory that may disregard the gravity of distributing harmful substances. Convictions for distribution are not simply technical violations; they represent conduct that directly affects community safety and contributes to the ongoing public health crisis. In totality, we believe HB 824 goes too far in broadening eligibility and could compromise the integrity of Maryland's criminal justice system. For these reasons, MCPA-MSA **OPPOSE HB 824** and urge an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report.

HB 824 - JUD - BOP - LOO.docx (1).pdf

Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: UNF



Board of Physicians

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Harbhajan Ajrawat, M.D., Chair

2026 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO.: House Bill 824 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
POSITION: Letter of Opposition

The Maryland Board of Physicians (the Board) is respectfully submitting this Letter of Opposition for House Bill (HB) 824 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance. HB 824 allows the distribution and dispensing of controlled dangerous substances (CDS) to be eligible for expungement.

The Board has serious concerns over the unintended consequences of HB 824. The distribution and dispensing of CDS are significant convictions and often result in licensure with restrictions or other conditions, and, at times, in the revocation of a license. If expunged, the Board may be unaware of the necessary information to properly protect the public or meet statutory mandates and obligations.

The access that health care providers have to CDS is unique to their profession. The Board's regulatory experience reveals that health care providers have distributed or dispensed CDS for personal use, and the Board has disciplined providers for overprescribing CDS and operating "pill mills"¹. Health care providers are in a position different from that of the average citizen. Not only can they access CDS themselves, but they can also provide access to others and make dosage recommendations that are trusted to be appropriate. It is essential that the Board is aware of any convictions regarding the distribution and dispensing of CDS so that appropriate public protection measures can be taken, such as prescribing restrictions or other conditions.

The Board has consistently collected information regarding CDS convictions. It is part of the Board's licensure application for dispensing permits. This information is standard and extremely relevant to the application and the subsequent authority granted to the applicant. It is an established precedent that notifying the Board of such information is appropriate, given the Board's responsibilities and role in regulation and public protection.

In addition, this information is essential for the Board to comply with statutory mandates and obligations. For example, there are clear statutory guidelines regarding prescribing and dispensing CDS and opioids in Health Occupations § [1-223](#). Violating the guidelines may be grounds for disciplinary action under Health Occupations §§ [14-404\(a\) \(27\) & \(28\)](#). One of the Board's core

¹ <https://www.mbp.state.md.us/bpqapp/Orders/D1198509.278.PDF>

responsibilities is the effective discipline and regulation of health care providers.

Finally, as a member of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (IMLC), the Board is also mandated to comply with the requirements in [Health Occupations, § 14-3A-01, Annotated Code of Maryland](#). This bill creates a barrier to compliance. The Board will have significant difficulties appropriately and accurately completing the Letter of Qualification (LOQ) as required by statute, and providing other required verifications and reports, potentially putting the State's Compact status at risk.

As part of the IMLC, the State of Principal Licensure (SPL) must complete an LOQ. To be eligible for the IMLC and receive an LOQ, a physician must possess a full and unrestricted license. If convictions for distributing or dispensing CDS are expunged and the Board is not made aware of them, a licensee who would otherwise have a restricted license may not be restricted. Therefore, the licensee would be inappropriately eligible for the Compact. This increases the public health risk for Marylanders as well as residents of all other Compact states.

The concern is similar for multiple additional provisions related to CDS, convictions, and disciplinary action, in which the Board is required to verify and report to the IMLC. For example, a physician seeking to renew with the IMLC cannot have a CDS license suspended or restricted by the State or the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration. However, if the State or federal government are not made aware of a conviction related to the distribution or dispensing of CDS, a physician who should not be eligible to renew may be inappropriately eligible to do so.

The Board is appreciative of the opportunity to express these concerns and is willing to work collaboratively on this matter. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Madeline DelGreco, Manager of Policy and Legislation, at the Maryland Board of Physicians, at 410-764-5053.

Sincerely,



Harbhajan Ajrawat, M.D.
Chair, Maryland Board of Physicians

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Maryland Department of Health or the Administration.

2026_03_03 HB 824 - Expungement Conviction of Dis

Uploaded by: Tiffany Clark

Position: INFO

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 824 – Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of
Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance (Support in Concept)

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports in concept House Bill 824 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance. HB 824 expands the list of felony convictions eligible for expungement to include convictions for distributing or dispensing a controlled dangerous substance under § 5-602 of the Criminal Law Article.

This bill directly supports our efforts to advance an equitable justice system that removes barriers to stable, productive futures for Marylanders who have completed their sentences and demonstrated genuine rehabilitation. Criminal records create significant and lasting obstacles to employment, housing, education, and economic stability and these are consequences that extend far beyond the sentence itself and often fall disproportionately on individuals whose convictions reflect circumstances, including addiction and economic hardship, that have long since changed. Drug distribution convictions, even at the felony level, can reflect a wide range of conduct and personal circumstances, and treating them as a permanent bar to expungement prevents individuals who are ready to contribute fully to their communities from doing so. Expanding eligibility to include these convictions, while maintaining existing requirements and judicial discretion in the expungement process, is a meaningful step toward a more equitable and effective justice system.

We appreciate the General Assembly's work on this important policy and welcome the opportunity to share our perspective.

Cc: Members of the Committee