

Support SB 710 - REDEEM Act

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM
Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



TO: Chair Will Smith and Senate Judic.Proceedings Committee

FROM: Phil Caroom, MAJR Executive Committee

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Md. Alliance for Justice Reform ([MAJR-www.ma4jr.org](http://www.ma4jr.org)) supports SB 710 that would permit prompt expungement of dismissed charges, that would greatly simplify the currently unwieldy list to permit expungement of all misdemeanors within 3 years, and that would shorten the time for expungement for eligible felonies within 5 years from completion of any sentences and supervision.

Reducing the employment penalty: Both federal and state studies clearly show that ex-offenders who are employed are much less likely to commit new offenses than those who are unemployed. A 2017 Greater Baltimore Committee report summarizes this research, stating:

the single largest determinant of re-arrest and re-conviction is whether or not a person is able to find a job upon release from prison. The probability of re-conviction for someone who is employed within two months of release and earning \$10 or more per hour is only 8 percent, one-third of the probability of an unemployed ex-offender.

Under current law, even dismissed charges may remain on a Marylander's record indefinitely, potentially causing an overly cautious employer, landlord or college-admissions board to deny important opportunities. Similarly, a Marylander who has "paid his or her debt to society" by successful completion of any sentence and who has maintained a clean record for a number of years also should be permitted the opportunity for a fresh start.

Multi-generational impacts: It also is important to realize that a criminal record's impact may not end with the individual so charged and/or convicted, even when she has served her time. According to a 2015 Huffington Post report, studies indicate that

Children of felons are seven times more likely to be incarcerated themselves. They are more likely (23 percent vs. 4 percent) to be expelled or suspended from school than other children. Thus, removing the stigma of the record—when a parent has served her sentence and established a clean record for a number of years—also may benefit the next generation.

Simplification of the current statute: Maryland's current laundry list of expungeable offenses, cross-referencing many other statutes, is confusing to a lay person who might want to represent herself and who might not have the funds for an attorney's assistance. SB 710 also provides long-overdue simplification that would make the expungement statute more user-friendly for non-lawyers.

As Job Opportunities Task Force advocates point out, "A criminal record can easily be both the cause and consequence of poverty." For all these reasons, Md. Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) urges a favorable report on SB 710.

PLEASE NOTE: Phil Caroom offers this testimony for Md. Alliance for Justice Reform and not for the Md. Judiciary.