

Safe & Just
Michigan

Report reveals opportunities to strengthen expungement expansion in Michigan

Report also shows transformative power of expungements in our state

LANSING — Clean Slate expungement expansion has already brought employment, housing and education opportunities to hundreds of thousands of Michiganders since it took effect three years ago, but a new report released by Lansing-based criminal justice reform organization Safe & Just Michigan indicates simple steps the state could take to bolster Clean Slate and maximize the benefits it offers Michiganders. The report is available at bit.ly/CleanSlate3Year.

Titled “*Clean Slate Year 3: The First Year of Automatic Expungements — Looking Back and Looking Ahead*,” the report outlines both the successes and challenges encountered since Clean Slate became a reality in Michigan. Clean Slate widened the petition process for expungement on April 11, 2021, by making more convictions eligible for expungement and allowing people to expunge more old convictions from their records by petitioning a judge. It was followed by automatic expungement, which took effect April 11, 2023, and removes many lower-level misdemeanors and felonies without the need for a courtroom appearance. In the past year alone, automatic expungement has cleared more than 1.4 million old convictions and given more than 280,000 people a completely clear record.

Getting an expungement can provide a powerful boost to a person’s life. A [study from the University of Michigan](#) found that a year after receiving an expungement, people’s wages increased an average of 23 percent, while they were 11 percent more likely to be employed than people whose records weren’t expunged.

“Clean Slate is a powerful tool that provides fresh starts and new opportunities to people around Michigan,” Safe & Just Michigan Executive Director **John S. Cooper** said. “But over the past three years, as we’ve helped people expunge their records, we’re seeing how many individuals are still struggling to take advantage of the new Clean Slate laws, and we’ve identified clear steps the

state can take to make expungements easier and ensure that expunged records are truly shielded from public view.”

The findings of the report were presented during an online panel discussion held Thursday hosted by Safe & Just Michigan. Cooper acted as moderator, and panelists included Safe & Just Michigan Clean Slate Project Manager **Kamau Sandiford**, Clean Slate Initiative Vice President of Programs **Jason Cooper**, Michigan Advocacy Program Pro-Bono Manager **Sarah Munro** and Michigan Assistant Attorney General **Michael K. Ajami**.

Key among the report’s recommendations is the creation of a free online portal where people could look up the status of their current criminal record. The state is doesn’t notify people when their records are automatically expunged and some people’s records have been wiped clear without their knowledge. As a result, some people who have received a fresh start still believe they have old felonies on their record, causing them to hesitate from pursuing good-paying jobs and safe housing.

Other recommendations outlined in the report include requiring commercial background check companies to refrain releasing information on expunged records, allowing the same background check companies to receive updated information directly from Michigan State Police databases, updating existing Clean Slate laws to address confusion created by apparent contradictions in the statutes and permitting nonprofits greater access to the state’s ICHAT criminal record check system so that more organizations can assist people in pursuing expungements.

“Michigan enacted some of the strongest Clean Slate laws in the country, but over the past three years, we’ve identified aspects of the law that can be improved upon,” Sandiford said. “We’ve outlined some targeted measures lawmakers could take to refine the existing process and make the expungement process easier, which will ultimately lead to more people in Michigan working at good jobs and providing for their families. There’s no reason not to do this.”

The report is available at bit.ly/CleanSlate3Year.

###

Safe & Just Michigan (www.safeandjustmi.org) works to advance policies that end Michigan’s over-use of incarceration and promote community safety and healing. We partner with Michigan organizations and leaders from across the political spectrum, including business and community leaders, faith communities, crime survivor organizations, formerly incarcerated individuals, prisoners and their families, as well as Michigan taxpayers statewide.