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Support HB 74, HB 112 & SB 22
Protect Virginia and Give People a Second Chance to Make an Honest Living

HB 74, HB 112 and SB 22 allow for the expungement of certain first-time misdemeanor offenses in very limited circumstances. HB 74 provides that a person who was convicted of a first offense misdemeanor possession of a controlled substance or first offense misdemeanor possession of marijuana may petition for an expungement of that conviction after 10 years. HB 112 and SB 22 provide that a person who was convicted of first offense underage alcohol possession, first offense marijuana possession, or a first offense of using a false ID to purchase alcohol, could petition for an expungement of that conviction after five years. All of these bills recognize the fundamentally American ideal of forgiving someone for a minor mistake made long in the past.

Youthful indiscretions can have a lasting impact. In Virginia, criminal convictions never go away. Even the most minor misdemeanor offense, such as possession of one marijuana joint, stays on a person's criminal record for life. Such a conviction says nothing about that person's character, ability to perform on the job or value to society. All of us have made bad decisions at one time or another, and nearly all of us have broken the law. What these convictions say are that some of us were unlucky enough to get caught.

Technology has made it easier to find criminal records online. The Internet has made the free flow of information the norm. While that's generally a good thing, it also means that one youthful mistake can follow a person around for life.

Helps make our communities safer. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), more than 650,000 individuals are released from prison every year. To reduce the recidivism rate for these individuals, the DOJ has identified three key elements to successful re-entry into our communities. One of these key elements is helping these individuals find and keep a job. Expunging old, minor convictions will better ensure that these individuals have an honest shot at finding employment. It's a first step toward reducing recidivism and making our communities safer.

Ensures a fair opportunity for Virginians seeking a second chance. The repercussions of a criminal conviction extend well beyond the specific criminal penalty handed down. An applicant's criminal background may be used to screen out an applicant, even if the applicant is otherwise fully qualified. Denying a person's application without considering their qualifications or rehabilitation is unfair; it prevents people who've completed their sentence from getting a fair chance at a fresh start.

The expungement bills – HB 74, HB 112, & SB 22 – are a win-win!
They protect the Commonwealth and ensure that
Virginians are judged on their merit, not their mistakes.