



## Center for Urban Families - 2024 Policy Agenda

The Center for Urban Families (CFUF) advocates for legislative initiatives to strengthen urban communities by helping fathers and families achieve stability and economic success. During the 90-day legislative session in Annapolis, CFUF will advocate for the following legislation:

### FAMILY LAW REFORM

#### **Child Support - Repeal License Suspensions for Lower-Income Obligor (Del. Toles/ Sen. Watson)**

Nearly half of Marylanders travel outside of their county for employment, and only 9% of jobs in the Baltimore region can be reached within one hour, one-way by public transit. A vehicle and a valid driver's license are thus necessary to obtain and sustain employment. License suspensions are one of many tools the federal government allows states to use in order to ensure non-custodial parents are compliant with their child support orders. The proposed legislation will eliminate driver's license suspensions as a penalty for child support obligors making less than 250% of the federal poverty line (~\$37,000).

#### **Child Support - Due Process in License Suspensions (Sen. Muse / Del. Simpson)**

Federal Code 42 U.S.C.A. § 666 (a16) states that license suspensions for child support obligors are only to be "used in appropriate cases" to "increase the effectiveness of the program." However, the current automated suspension mechanism targets obligors indiscriminately - some of whom are disabled, lack employment, or even have possession of the child. The proposed legislation ensures that a court provides due process and determines that the suspension is "appropriate" before a license is suspended.

### CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENTS

#### **Automatic Expungement of Convictions (Sen. McKay / Del. Moon)**

Last year, Maryland voters legalized cannabis, leading the legislature to advocate for the expungement of charges related to cannabis possession, only to find that this was not possible due to current laws surrounding subsequent convictions, the unit rule, et al. The proposed legislation automates the expungement process (instead of written petitions) and seeks to clear many barriers to expungement access.

#### **Redefining "Satisfactory" Expungement (Sen. Carter / Del. Bartlett)**

Last year, the Court of Special Appeals ruled that any probation violation means a conviction is *indefinitely* ineligible for expungement under a legal interpretation that a violation means that the individual has not "satisfactorily completed the sentence" (regardless of the nature of the violation). The proposed legislation seeks to clarify that expungements are to be allowed when the time allotted for the sentence has expired, including mandatory supervision and the waiting period.

### **Unit Rule Repeal (Sen. Carter / Del. Williams)**

Under [§10-107 of the Criminal Procedure](#) Article, any group of charges from the same incident, other than a minor traffic violation or cannabis possession, are called a “unit.” If a person is not entitled to expungement of one charge or conviction in a unit, the person is not entitled to expungement of any other charge or conviction in the unit. This becomes a significant barrier to expungement, even for non-convictions or charges that are no longer crimes. The proposed legislation allows for partial expungement of charges within a unit.

### **“Good Cause” Expungement Establishment - Convictions (Sen. Carter / Del. Ruff)**

Current law states that courts may grant a petition for expungement on a [showing of good cause](#) if the charges resulted in a non-conviction, probation before judgment, stet, or the charge was vacated. The proposed legislation seeks to expand the court’s good cause expungement power to misdemeanors or felonies they deem worthy of expungement.

## **POVERTY ERADICATION**

### **The ENOUGH Act (President Ferguson/Speaker Jones – By Request of the Administration)**

The Center for Urban Families is supporting the Governor's ENOUGH Act, which uses neighborhood-based interventions in communities with disproportionately high numbers of children living in poverty. The ENOUGH initiative will give communities support to address the root causes of poverty in their neighborhoods, working across sectors - including education, health, workforce, housing, and community safety. State funding will leverage federal, local, and philanthropic resources.