

Expanding Access to Expungement

Georgia should continue to remove barriers for rehabilitated individuals who want to work. In 2020, a coalition of 6 major corporations, the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, 77 organizations, and legislators teamed up to unanimously pass SB 288 to expand record clearing and protect Georgia employers. Making record restriction work better for more Georgians will help meet workforce needs and improve public safety.

Georgia Justice Project has assisted thousands of Georgians with a record who are working hard to get a better job and support their families and has worked with legislators, businesses, and other stakeholders to successfully advocate for 22 changes to Georgia law that reduce legal barriers to reentry. **Record restriction is an essential tool to help Georgia employers access the Untapped Talent of the 4.5 million people with a Georgia criminal record.**

Small changes would open more opportunities to rehabilitated Georgians and benefit employers who face severe workforce shortages.

- 1 Clean up unintended obstacles.**
 - Allow trafficking survivors to expunge records without delays
 - Those who go through an intensive year-long process to pardon their record should not have to start all over when seeking expungement
- 2 Remove barriers to misdemeanor expungement.**
 - Current law limits an individual to two misdemeanor expungements in their life, regardless of how old the offenses are, mitigating circumstances, or what the person has accomplished since their last conviction
 - Judges should have discretion to expunge any eligible misdemeanor offense
- 3 Bring consistency to the expungement of misdemeanor theft offenses.**
 - All pardoned felony theft convictions are eligible for expungement, but many misdemeanor theft convictions are not; judges should have the discretion to expunge a misdemeanor theft

EXPUNGEMENT WORKS



Increases Public Safety

- Steady employment reduces recidivism by more than half¹
- University of Michigan study found fewer than 1% of people were re-convicted of a felony within five years of record clearing²



Strengthens the Economy

- Wages increase by an average of 22% within one year of expungement³
- Benefits of expungement outweigh costs by \$5,760 per individual⁴

Want to learn more? Visit [GJP.org/advocacy](https://www.gjp.org/advocacy) or contact Wade Askew, Policy Manager at Wade@GJP.org or 404.827.0027 ext. 214.

1. Safer Foundation. Safer Foundation three-year recidivism study (2008).

2. Prescott, J.J. and Starr, Sonja B., Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study (2020) Harvard Law Review.

3. Collateral Consequences Resource Center (2018). Michigan set-asides found to increase wages and reduce recidivism. Federal Sentencing Reporter, 3, 361-362. doi:10.1525/fsr.2018.30.4-5.361

4. Chapin, M., Elhanan, A., Rillera, M., Solomon, A.K., & Woods, T.L. (2014). A cost-benefit analysis of criminal record expungement in Santa Clara County. Stanford Public Policy.