



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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State Legislators Unveil Bipartisan “Expungement Reform: Pathways to Employment” Bill

Legislators and stakeholders come together to support bipartisan workforce development initiative

MADISON - On Wednesday, Senators Alberta Darling and Kelda Roys and Representatives David Steffen and Evan Goyke unveiled legislation that provides pathways to employment for individuals through criminal justice reform.

"Expungement is a perfect example of how criminal justice reform and workforce development are closely linked," said Rep. Steffen. "Once enacted, this proposal will provide immediate employment access for thousands of individuals who are looking to overcome their past and find success in the workforce."

Expungement refers to a process where a person can petition to have his or her record expunged (or sealed) of a non-violent, lower-level offense. An individual is only eligible for expungement if they meet certain criteria. Currently, a judge can only order that an individual is eligible for expungement at the time of sentencing and it is only available to individuals under the age of 25. This bill would allow a judge to order that a record be expunged after a person completes his or her sentence, and removes the arbitrary age limit of 25. The legislation also ensures for employment purposes that an expunged record does not prohibit an individual from obtaining a professional license in Wisconsin.

"It has been an extremely tough year for many," Sen. Darling said, "As we continue to move closer and closer to a sense of normalcy, we can expect to once again have workforce shortage again. Our goal is to help the many hardworking people who won't have a chance at employment because of a mistake made years ago. This bill gives them a chance to support themselves and their families while helping the needs of employers throughout our state."

"This important legislation is the key to removing barriers to employment for so many Wisconsin citizens," said Rep. Goyke. "We have worked closely with numerous stakeholders, both in the courthouse and in the workforce, while also hearing from individuals and families throughout the state supporting this reform. Our bill moves Wisconsin's expungement law in line with most of the country by modernizing the court process for expungement, which will give a pathway to employment for thousands of Wisconsinites."

"Expungement reform is an important and necessary step toward a more equitable criminal justice system," said Sen. Roys. "This bipartisan bill will help restore opportunity to thousands of Wisconsinites – opportunity that is disproportionately denied to people of color -- and I'm excited to be part of building a more just society."

The bill was circulated for co-sponsorship today and will be introduced in February.

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