

Chair Mariani and Members of the House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Committee:

The [Minnesota Coalition for Youth Justice](#) is writing today in support of HF 1152 and the establishment of an automatic expungement process for members of our communities impacted by the criminal legal system. It is time that we remove unnecessary bureaucratic barriers that prevent people from being able to fully participate in our society.

For the last year, members of the Minnesota Coalition for Youth Justice have supported young people in Hennepin County through the expungement process. It has been extremely troubling to hear the stories of youth who have successfully resolved their court cases, only to continue to be dragged down by the weight of a juvenile record. Expungements offer an opportunity for a fresh start, to allow young people to follow their dreams. The process as it's currently enacted is lengthy and burdensome, preventing many who are eligible from ever beginning. We have talked to youth who have invested time and money into job training programs, who are looking for steady employment to support their families, who by all accounts have learned and grown from previous mistakes. However, their juvenile records continue to weigh them down and the process for having those records sealed is inaccessible.

We talk to young people who are brilliant and good, who are fully deserving of a clean slate. And still, the process of gathering their court records, of getting documents notarized, of sending notice to dozens of agencies, is just too much. The petition process asks these youth to return to courts where they have experienced deep trauma and stand again before a judge. For many of the people we work with, this prospect is too daunting. The current expungement process is especially unrealistic for the low-income members of our community who make up a disproportionate portion of those who need this very service.

HF 1152 is an important step toward alleviating undue burdens and making it so that people with juvenile records are able to fully participate in our communities at the close of their court proceedings. The time to make this change is now. The [Juvenile Law Center](#) has given Minnesota two out of five stars on our policies for juvenile record expungement, putting us in the lower half of states nationally. We can and should do better by the youth in our communities.

Thank you for your support of this important legislation.