



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 1, 2017

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A Bill Providing Pathways to Employment for Youthful Offenders Receives Public Hearing
Bipartisan legislation would fix Wisconsin's outdated expungement law

Madison— Today, a bipartisan bill that would provide a comprehensive reform to Wisconsin's outdated and inconsistent expungement law received a public hearing in the Assembly Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. Representative David Steffen (R-Howard) and Representative Evan Goyke (D-Milwaukee) recently introduced Assembly Bill 331, which has garnered strong bipartisan support as well as endorsements from the practitioners and employers impacted by the bill.

Current law requires a judge to make an expungement determination at the time of sentencing. This proposal would allow youthful offenders a chance to have their record expunged after completing their sentence, thereby giving judges the opportunity to consider an individual's post-sentence behavior when determining expungement. The bill also provides a clear definition of what expungement means, how expunged records are to be handled, and requires that individuals be informed of their expungement options at the time of sentencing.

"Today's public hearing was another step in the right direction towards fixing our state's outdated and inconsistent expungement law. Current law is structured in a way that prevents expungement from serving its true purpose—which is to provide youthful offenders who have reformed themselves, a chance at a fresh start and an opportunity to rebuild their lives," said Rep. Steffen.

The proposal makes no changes to the crimes and/or ages eligible for expungement under current law. In order to be eligible, an individual must have been under the age of 25 when they committed the crime. Only low level offenses including misdemeanors and certain H and I felonies are eligible to be considered for expungement.

"Access to employment is key to ensuring individuals who have straightened out their lives will continue on the right path. This bill is a critical step to ensuring that a pathway to employment for youthful offenders exists, which serves a direct benefit to both the youth as well as employers throughout our state looking to fill vacancies," said Rep. Goyke.

The bill now awaits a vote by the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

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