



PROJECT Clean Slate

IMPACT REPORT 2016-2026

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OPENING LETTER

April 2026

For the past decade, Project Clean Slate (PCS) has worked to expunge criminal convictions for Detroiters seeking new opportunities and increased access to their communities. Thousands of Detroiters have sought—and obtained—a second chance because of PCS.

This Project Clean Slate Impact Report, issued during Second Chance Month, marks ten years of Detroit's free expungement program—a decade of opening doors, restoring dignity, and expanding opportunities for residents across this great City.

From the outset, the mission was clear: to build a Detroit where residents who have paid their debt to society have access to record-clearing services needed to move forward—unburdened by the past and empowered to embrace the opportunities ahead. Access to employment, housing, and financial stability should not be out of reach because of a conviction that is legally eligible for expungement. By providing expungement services at no cost to Detroiters, PCS removed the financial and knowledge barriers surrounding expungement and ensured that justice and opportunity are accessible to all.

Over the past ten years, PCS has helped thousands of residents expunge eligible convictions, reconnect with the workforce, secure stable housing, and provide more fully for themselves and their families. Behind every number in this report is a story of resilience – a man earning a promotion he dreamed of, a parent able to volunteer at their child's school, a neighbor finally able to move beyond a chapter that no longer reflects who they are.

Project Clean Slate’s success would not have been possible without the dedication of partners, funders, and volunteers, who work tirelessly to provide advocacy and support. That collaboration reflects what can be achieved when policy is aligned with compassion and purpose.

As you review this report, consider not only the measurable outcomes, like employment and housing, but also the broader impact on mental health, families, and community well-being. Second chances strengthen individuals. Second chances strengthen families. Second chances strengthen neighborhoods. Second chances build a stronger Detroit for all of us.

While we celebrate this milestone, **Project Clean Slate’s work is not finished.** PCS remains committed to increasing awareness, expanding access, and ensuring that every eligible Detroiters knows that a second chance is within reach.

We want to thank everyone who has contributed to this effort over the past decade. Together, we are building a more equitable, inclusive, opportunity-rich community. **And together, we will Rise Higher!**

Sincerely,

Mary Sheffield, Mayor



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Mallett".

Conrad Mallett, Corporation Counsel



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephani LaBelle".

Stephani LaBelle, Executive Director



INTRODUCTION



ABOUT

A thriving city creates opportunity for all its residents and helps remove barriers that limit economic, social, physical, and mental well-being, and Project Clean Slate (PCS) plays a critical role in that work.

PCS helps Detroiters clear criminal records and improves their access to opportunities. Tens of thousands of Detroiters are eligible for expungement. However, many do not seek expungement for a variety of reasons: they do not know they are eligible, they are financially unable to retain an attorney, they have had a negative experience with the criminal justice system, or they do not know how to navigate the complex process. PCS works relentlessly to alleviate these issues and create more opportunities for Detroiters.

This Impact Report looks at PCS' processes and impact, both of which support the notion that programs like PCS are necessary to build and maintain a thriving community. The report also highlights client testimony, which speaks of barriers those with criminal convictions face, the impact convictions have on families and communities, and the ways in which a conviction hinders opportunities and growth. Importantly, the client testimonials also explain the critical nature of expungement and the ways in which lives of Detroiters and their families have improved post-expungement.





2019 Press Conference: former Mayor Mike Duggan, legislators, and Executive Director Stephani LaBelle.

HISTORY

Thousands of Detroiters who want to work and contribute to the City's comeback had been held back for too long because of past mistakes. In response to that challenge, in 2016 then-Mayor Mike Duggan launched Project Clean Slate (PCS) to remove barriers Detroiters faced when seeking new employment, housing, and educational opportunities. Free for City residents, PCS was designed to help Detroiters clear their criminal records and access increased opportunities.

Then-corporation counsel Butch Hollowell implemented the program, which was well-received by the community. The expungement legislation was restrictive and many Detroiters were not eligible. Two staff members obtained nine expungements in 2017. The following year, then-Corporation Counsel Lawrence Garcia recruited attorney Stephani LaBelle to join PCS. Her criminal defense experience, effective case management style, and altruistic nature proved to be the key to PCS' success. She obtained 119 expungements from May-December 2018. In 2019, Duggan tasked Senior Advisor Carrie Jones with increasing the number of expungements PCS obtained. Bloomberg Associates conducted a convening that resulted in PCS securing grant funds from several entities. Funds came in from the US Conference of Mayors, the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan, the Hudson-Webber Foundation, and more.

That funding allowed PCS to scale up and add additional staff, transforming the expungement program. Also in 2019, Duggan championed bi-partisan legislation to reform Michigan's expungement laws. LaBelle testified in support of the legislation in front of the Michigan House and Senate Judiciary Committees.



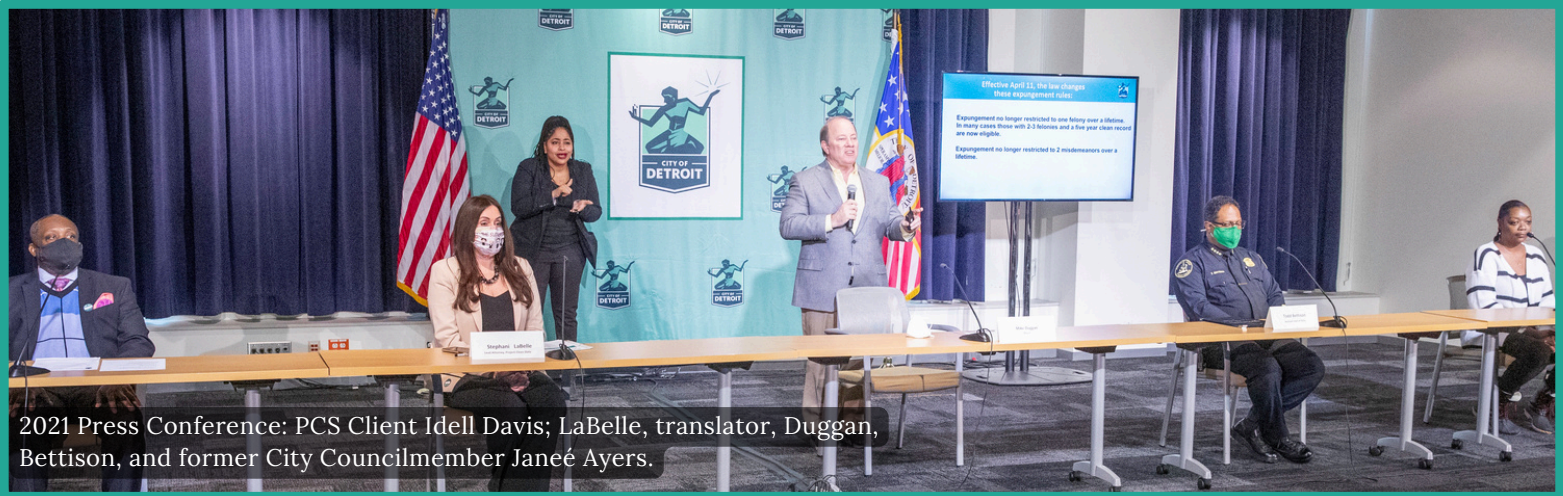
Judiciary Committee Testimony, 2019: LaBelle

The legislation was signed into law in 2020 by Governor Gretchen Whitmer, and greatly expanded the number and types of convictions eligible for expungement. The legislation took effect in April 2021—**more than doubling the number of Detroiters eligible for expungement**. The second part of the law, automatic expungement, took effect in April 2023.

In January 2021, Duggan held a press conferencing discussing the new legislation and informing residents that PCS was available for all eligible Detroiters.



Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrest, Governor Gretchen Whitmer, PCS Client Hector Santiago, and Duggan.



2021 Press Conference: PCS Client Idell Davis; LaBelle, translator, Duggan, Bettison, and former City Councilmember Janée Ayers.



Davis



LaBelle



LaBelle and Bettison



1,000 Expungements Celebration, September 2022: current and former PCS Staff (l-r): Christina Guirguis, Jordan Officer, Sharron Lewis, Shayla McElroy, LaBelle, Duggan, Amanda Zack, Carrie Jones, and Kara Judd.

After receiving several grants and an increase of its City budget, PCS was able to scale up and meet the demand the new legislation created. Year after year, PCS outperforms the prior year and helps more Detroiters access expungement. By 2023, PCS began expunging approximately 5,000+ convictions per year for Detroiters.

Since 2016, PCS has helped Detroit residents expunge over 20,300 convictions. The data collected by PCS and analyzed, in part, by a research team at University of Michigan School of Law, confirms the following. First, PCS' work to help Detroiters obtain expungement is unmatched in both scale and quantity. Second, PCS serves as a model for cities and states seeking to build or maintain thriving communities. In some instances, the impact of expungement is not quantifiable; however, the client testimonials in this Impact Report address the power of expungement. Whether a parent is now able to attend their child's field trip as a volunteer, or a grandparent can now cross the border to Canada to visit their grandchildren without worry, the impact of expungement is far-reaching.



10,000 Expungements Celebration, June 2024: Duggan, LaBelle, and PCS Client Stephen Erter.



15,000 Expungements Celebration, June 2025: PCS Staff.



Mathis Expungement Clinic, 2025. Head Legal Assistant Kara Judd and Admin Assistant Candice Ware.

VISION, MISSION & VALUES

Vision: Project Clean Slate envisions a Detroit where residents have access to efficient expungement services to remove the stigma of past mistakes, increase access to opportunities, and provide a fresh start for Detroiters and future generations.

Mission: At Project Clean Slate, we believe in second chances. Our mission is to provide free legal services to Detroiters seeking expungement, guiding them through the process with compassion and respect, while connecting them to employment, housing, and educational resources. We are committed to breaking down barriers, promoting equity, and ensuring that all Detroiters—no matter their neighborhood—have the opportunity to build a brighter future.

Values:

- **Quality Customer Service:** Committed to delivering efficient, quick, and friendly service to clients, while building strong relationships with every client served.
- **Effective Communication:** Committed to encouraging the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and information to achieve program purpose and fulfill Vision.
- **Teamwork:** Committed to working together to achieve the common goal of supporting Detroiters who are seeking a fresh start and new opportunities.
- **Positivity:** Committed to embracing the PCS mission with passion and consistently showing personal and professional pride in serving Detroiters.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Project Clean Slate was established to provide assistance to City of Detroit residents in removing barriers that limit their opportunities. PCS works relentlessly to advance its key goals.



15,000 Expungements Celebration, June 2025: Corporation Counsel Conrad Mallett.

GOAL 1:

Breaking down barriers, promoting equity, and ensuring that Detroiters have an opportunity to build a brighter future.

Objective 1.1

Increase access to expungement services by conducting outreach in all neighborhoods and offering services at accessible community locations.

Objective 1.2

Coordinate criminal record error correction with law enforcement agencies and courts to increase expungement eligibility and avoid delays in eligibility analysis.

Objective 1.3

Reduce application filing delays by streamlining record ordering/payment processes with courts.

GOAL 2:

Facilitate increased economic benefits for clients, their families, and their communities.

Objective 2.1

Partner with workforce agencies to increase clients' employment opportunities.

Objective 2.2

Ensure courts and the Michigan State Police are properly sealing expunged convictions.

Objective 2.3

Minimize post-expungement employment and housing problems clients encounter relating to background companies' failure to seal expunged convictions.



GOAL 3:

Advance reforms to expungement legislation to increase eligibility.

Objective 3.1

Support legislative reforms that remove the “conviction in waiting period” portion of automatic expungement legislation.

Objective 3.2

Encourage appropriate application of automatic expungement legislation to promote fairness and equity, by advocating for statewide software and streamlining reporting from courts.

Second Chance Summit, 2024:
LaBelle and former DPD Chief of
Police James White.



PARTNERS

PCS partners play an essential role in helping Detroiters obtain life-changing opportunities.

Project Clean Slate is deeply grateful to its dedicated partners who work alongside the PCS team to create positive change for Detroiters. The achievement of 20,000+ expungements is a shared milestone—only made possible through collective effort.

From public agencies to community partners, PCS is grateful to all who have supported, and continue to support, its mission. The program’s partners’ unwavering commitment to helping Detroiters access the limitless benefits of expungement is what has allowed PCS and the community it serves to thrive. Together, PCS and its partners have changed thousands of lives. This work will continue in the years ahead.



10,000 Expungements Celebration, June 2024:
Former Michigan State Rep. Graham Filler and Duggan.



Second Chance Summit, 2024: DPD OMA Lawanna Lewis.

Second chances are not created alone.

- Bloomberg Associates
- Detroit City Council
- Detroit at Work
- Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation
- Detroit Future City
- Detroit Pistons
- Detroit Police Department
- Michigan Department of Attorney General
- Michigan State Police
- Safe and Just Michigan
- State Court Administrative Office
- University of Michigan
- Wayne State University Law School



FUNDERS

Second chances are powered by commitment and investment.

Project Clean Slate is deeply grateful to the funders whose support makes this work possible. Their commitment provides the resources needed to expand access to expungement and ensure Detroiters can pursue new opportunities without carrying the weight of their past.

The milestone 20,000+ expungements reflects not only the dedication of the PCS team and its partners, but also the trust and generosity of the funders who believe in the PCS mission. Their support strengthens the program and helps sustain its impact across the community.

Thanks to continued investments, PCS will continue building pathways to opportunity for Detroit today and in years ahead.

PCS funders play an essential role in helping Detroiters obtain life-changing opportunities.

- Ballmer Group
- Bendit Family Fund
- Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
- Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance
- Grant (JAG) Program
- Hudson-Webber Foundation
- Michigan Justice Fund
- Simon Foundation
- Song Foundation
- US Conference of Mayors



VOLUNTEERS

The Project Clean Slate team is incredibly grateful for the volunteers who help make this work possible. Pro bono notaries generously give their time each Thursday to assist with application signings, while pro bono attorneys provide essential support during expungement hearings. Project Clean Slate thanks all volunteers for their dedication to supporting Detroiters on their path forward.



THANK YOU

- Bodman
- Bush Seyferth
- Clark Hill
- DTE Energy
- Honigman
- Maddin Houser
- Miller Canfield
- The Sam Bernstein Law Firm



DATA

30,600+

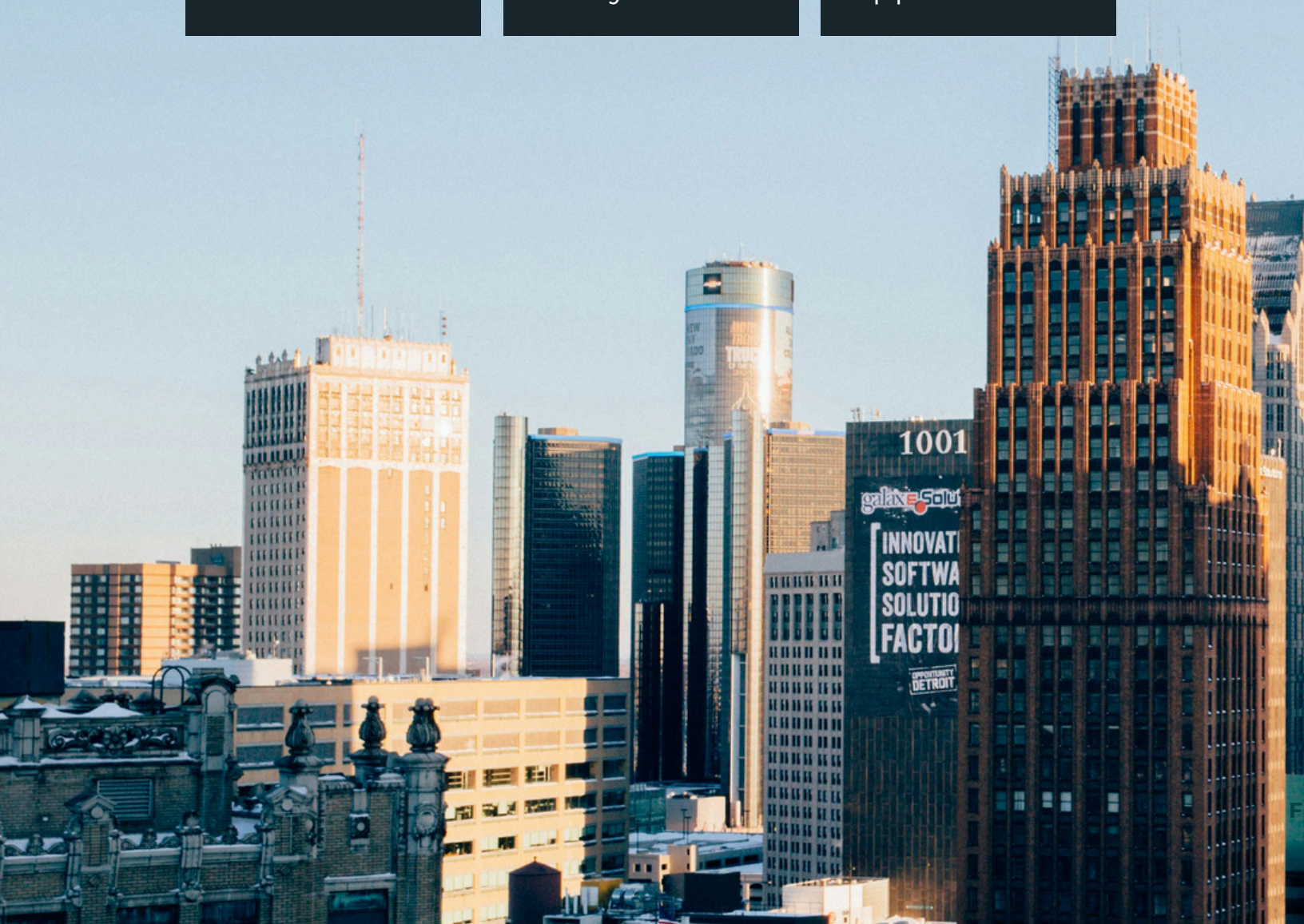
Clients
Registered

4,000+

Records
Updated
by DPD

18,000+

Application
Signing
Appointments



2016-2026

21,600+

Applications
Filed

20,500+

Expungements
Obtained

99%

Expungement
Success Rate

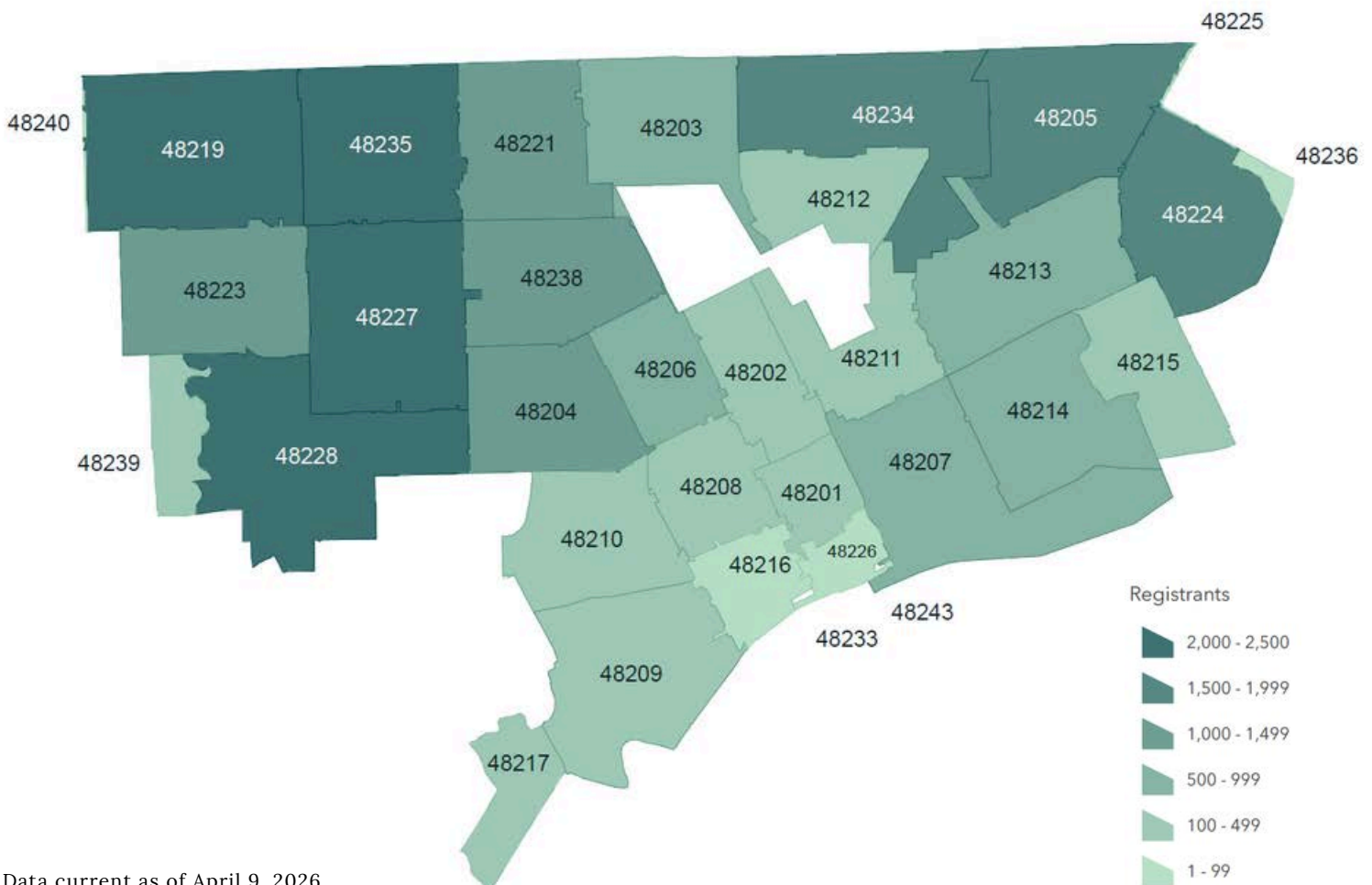


REGISTRATIONS

Registration for Project Clean Slate was offered only in person prior to Covid-19, but during the pandemic, PCS began offering online registration. This proved beneficial to clients who faced barriers with in-person registration, including transportation, child care, and employment hours.

Since 2016, over 30,000 Detroiters have registered for Project Clean Slate.

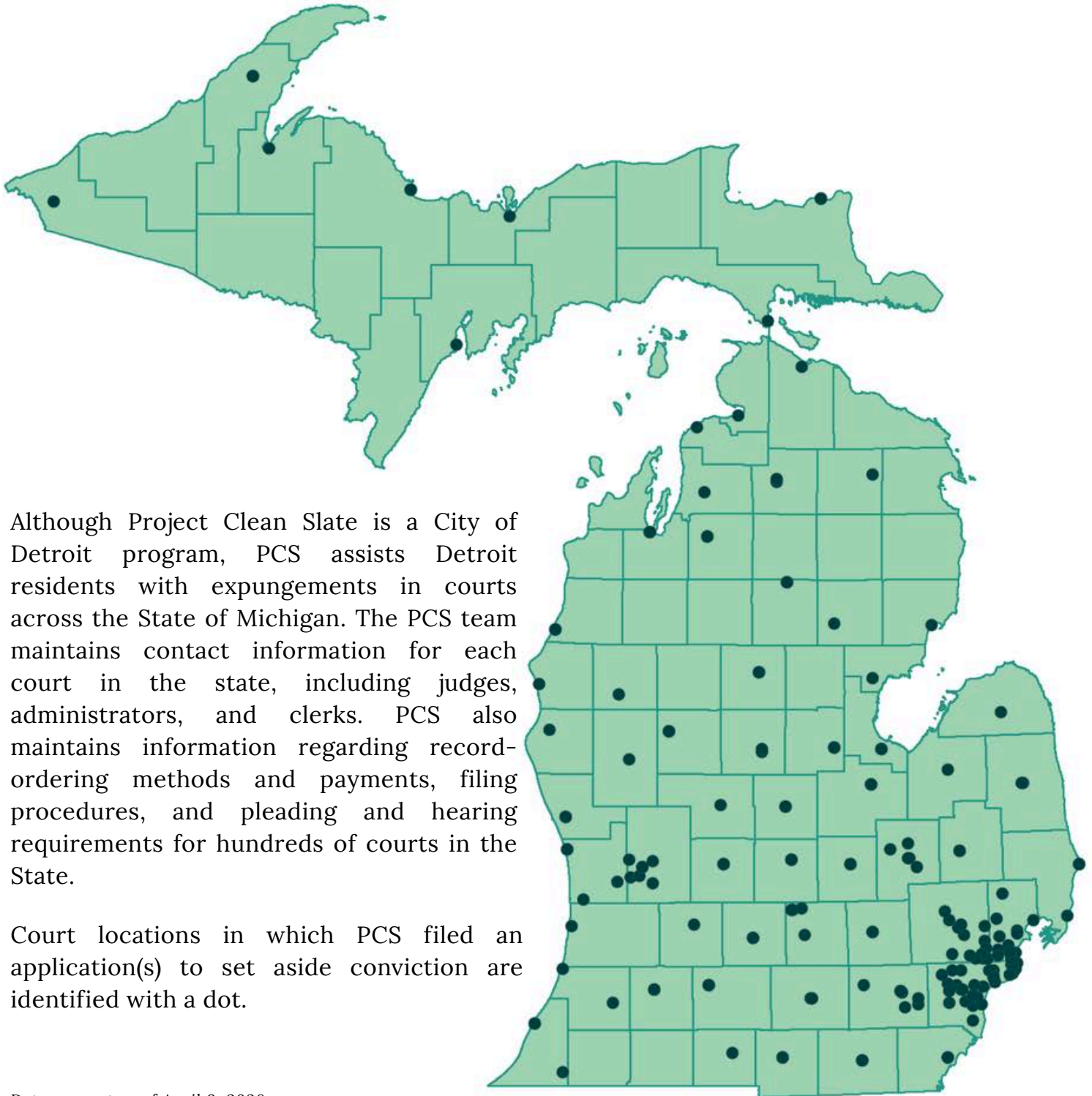
PCS registrants reside in zip codes across the entire City. The areas with the most registrants are zip codes 48219, 48227, 48228, and 48235.



Data current as of April 9, 2026.

SOURCE: Project Clean Slate Case Management System

WHERE PCS FILED

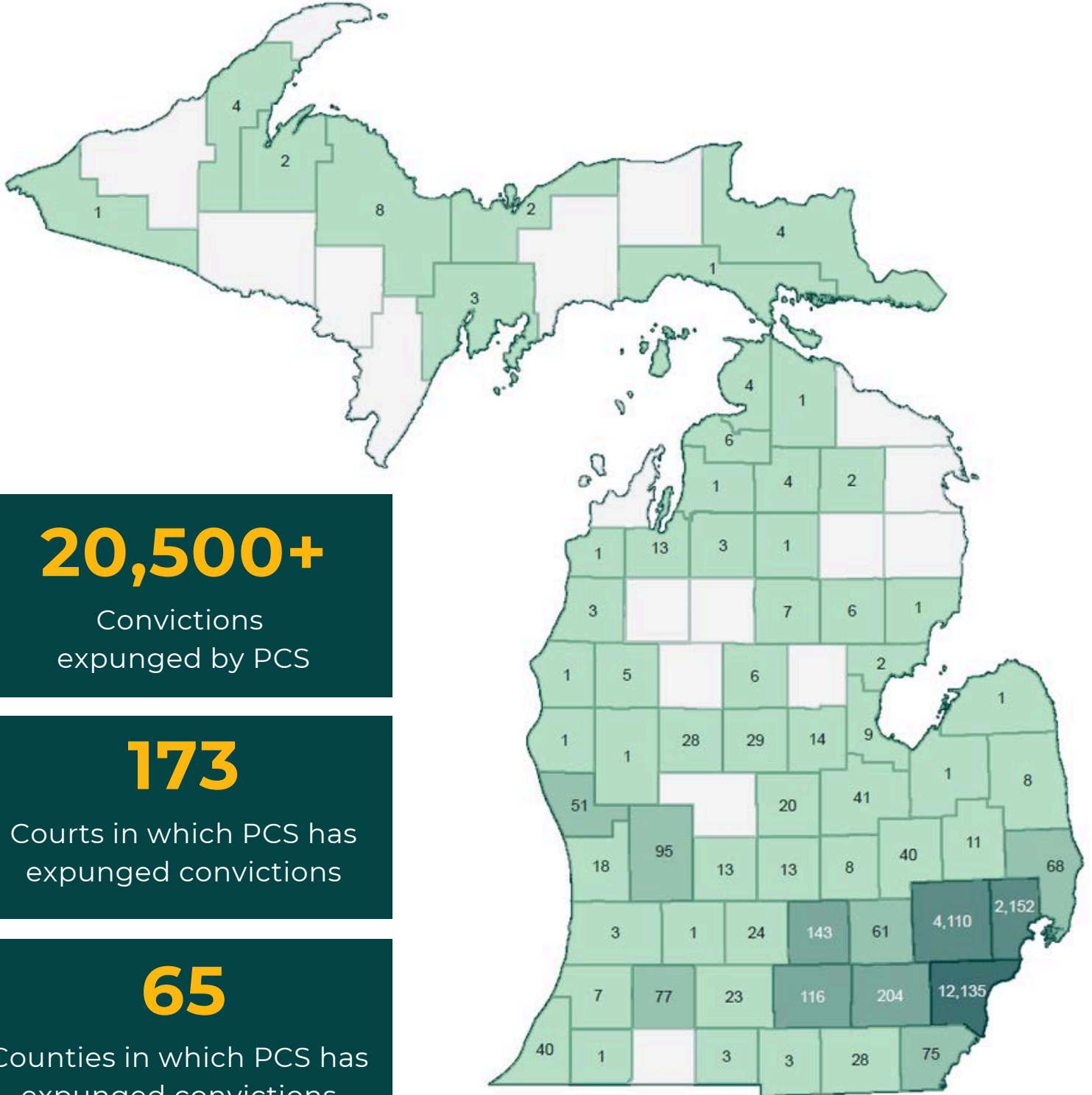


Although Project Clean Slate is a City of Detroit program, PCS assists Detroit residents with expungements in courts across the State of Michigan. The PCS team maintains contact information for each court in the state, including judges, administrators, and clerks. PCS also maintains information regarding record-ordering methods and payments, filing procedures, and pleading and hearing requirements for hundreds of courts in the State.

Court locations in which PCS filed an application(s) to set aside conviction are identified with a dot.

Data current as of April 9, 2026.
SOURCE: Project Clean Slate Case Management System

WHERE PCS EXPUNGED



Data current as of April 9, 2026.
SOURCE: Project Clean Slate Case Management System

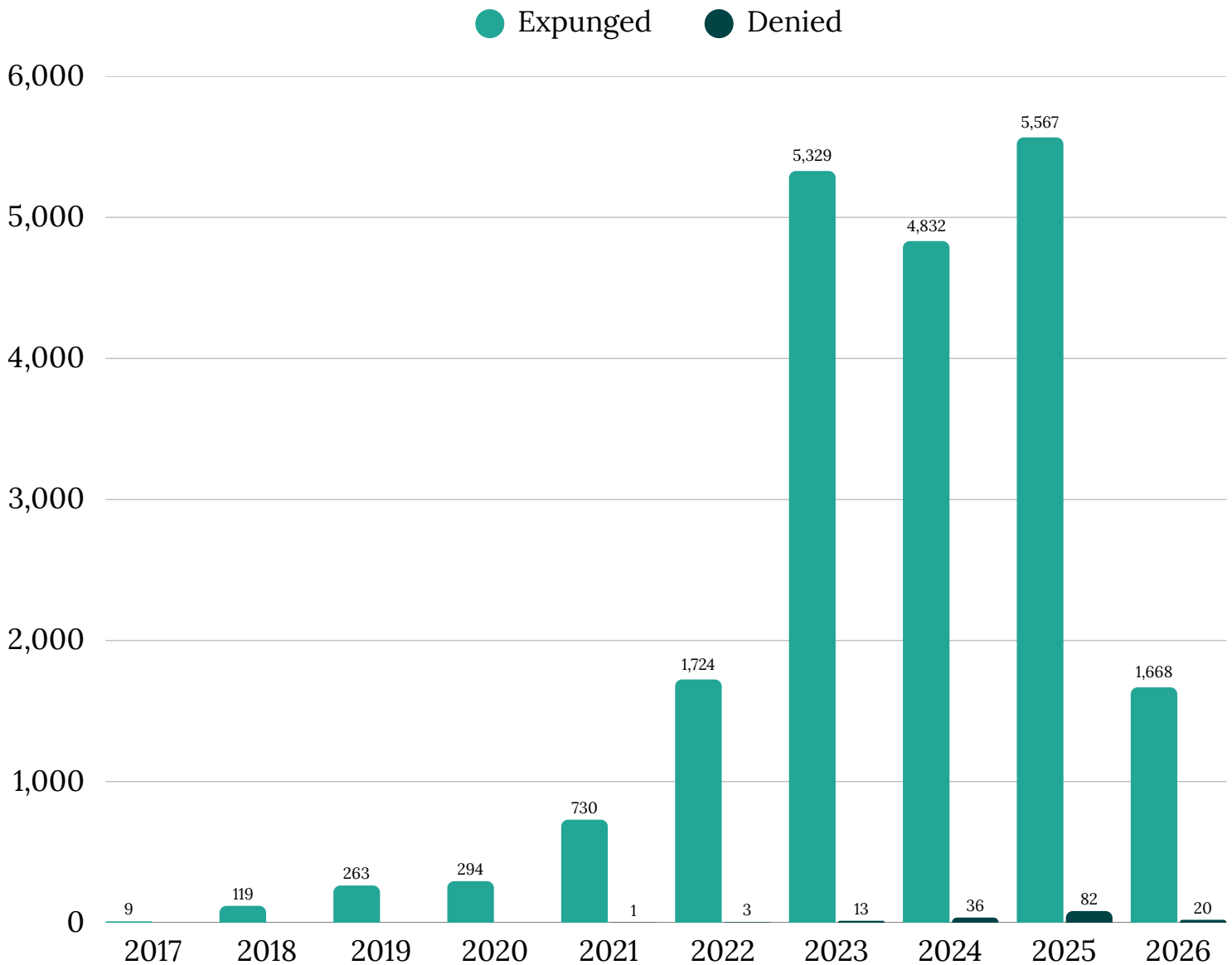
20,500+
Convictions
expunged by PCS

173
Courts in which PCS has
expunged convictions

65
Counties in which PCS has
expunged convictions

EXPUNGEMENTS

As discussed previously, PCS started small, obtaining nine expungements in 2017. Now, PCS averages approximately 5,000 expungements per year and has a 99% success rate.



Data current as of April 9, 2026.
SOURCE: Project Clean Slate Case Management System

JUSTICE SYSTEM PERCEPTIONS

Individuals currently or formerly involved in the criminal justice system tend to carry a negative perception of the criminal justice system. Regardless of cause, a solution is needed. Analysis of data collected via a third-party survey, as well as client testimonials, provides convincing evidence that PCS leads to more positive perceptions of the criminal justice system.

A recent study of PCS clients and their experiences shows that feeling heard, satisfaction with PCS, and feeling respected are significant predictors of an improved perception of the criminal justice system. This is true even for those clients who do not receive an expungement from PCS.

The data suggests that people’s experiences with PCS’ guidance and hands-on support as they navigate the expungement process play a larger role in improving views of the justice system than whether they ultimately receive an expungement.

A community that wants to thrive and uplift its residents should consider using PCS as a model –not only for expungement services—but to increase perceptions of the criminal justice system by those impacted by it the most.

SOURCE: Edmonds, Mira, J.J. Prescott, and Sonja B. Starr (2026). The Self-Reported Effects of Criminal Record Expungement (working paper).



51%

of PCS applicants who held negative views of the criminal justice system, viewed the system as more fair after working with PCS

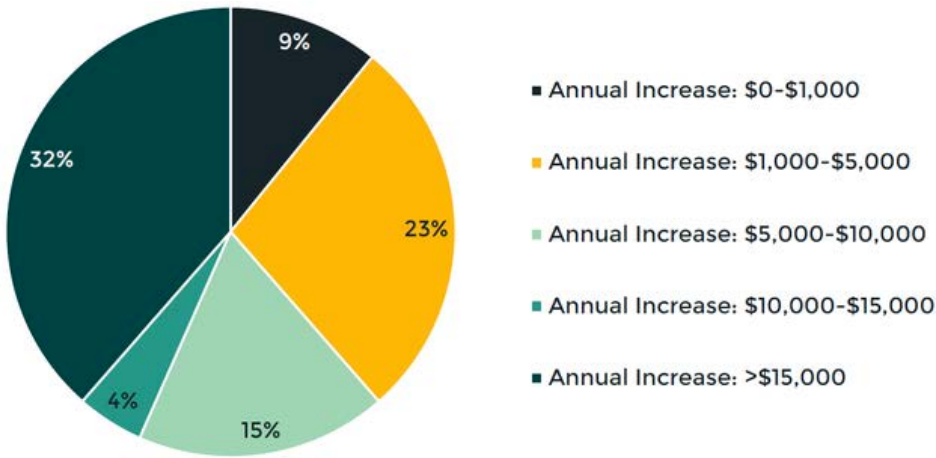
SOURCE: Edmonds, Mira, J.J. Prescott, and Sonja B. Starr (2026). The Self-Reported Effects of Criminal Record Expungement (working paper).

EMPLOYMENT

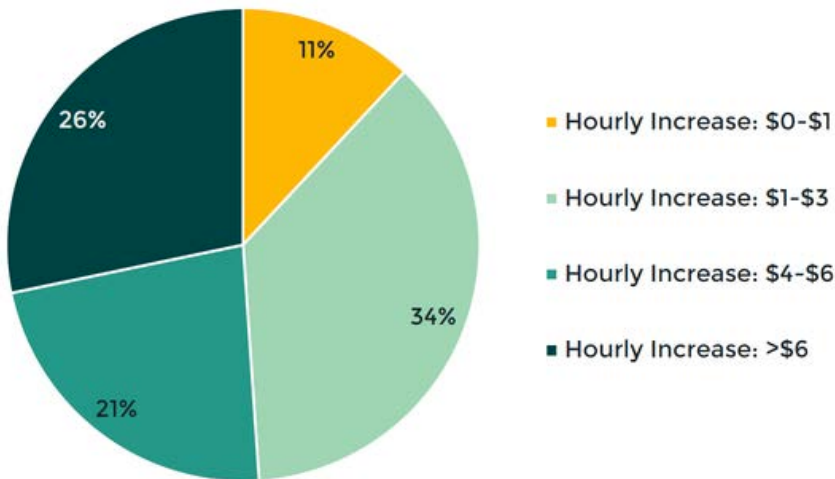
One year post-expungement, individuals see an average 23% improvement in wages. By the end of the second year, the average increases to 25%.

SOURCE: Prescott, J.J. and Sonja B. Starr (2020). "Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study." *Harvard Law Review* 133(8): 2460-2555.

Surveyed clients who received an expungement and saw hourly wage improvements



Surveyed clients who received an expungement and saw hourly wage improvements



SOURCES: Edmonds, Mira, J.J. Prescott, and Sonja B. Starr (2026). "The Self-Reported Effects of Criminal Record Expungement (working paper) and Project Clean Slate Case Management System."

53%

of PCS registrants identified new or better employment opportunities as a motivation for seeking expungement

SOURCE: Project Clean Slate Case Management System

48%

of PCS expungement recipients reported an improvement in their employment conditions

SOURCE: Edmonds, Mira, J.J. Prescott, Sonja Starr, and German Marquez Alcala (2025). "The Expungement Process: Survey Evidence on Applicant Experiences." *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law*, 22(2): 71-124.

HOUSING

Many landlords run background checks, and even old or minor convictions can result in an automatic denial. Individuals with a criminal conviction are often denied access to stable housing, even if otherwise qualified. Expungement helps remove housing barriers and makes it easier for Detroiters to secure stable housing for themselves and their families.

A research team at the University of Michigan Law School and University of Chicago Law School conducted a large-scale survey of PCS applicants, and found that about one-third of the respondents indicated improved housing was a motivator for seeking expungement. Edmonds, Mira, J.J. Prescott, Sonja Starr, and German Marquez Alcala (2025). "The Expungement Process: Survey Evidence on Applicant Experiences." *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law*, 22(2): 71-124.



70%+

of surveyed PCS registrants who received an expungement and reported finding better housing, attributed the improved housing to the expungement

SOURCE: Edmonds, Mira, J.J. Prescott, Sonja Starr, and German Marquez Alcala (2025). "The Expungement Process: Survey Evidence on Applicant Experiences." *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law*, 22(2): 71-124.

HOUSING TESTIMONIALS

“I’m disabled, I’m no longer able to work. With this opportunity, I can get into better housing. By Project Clean Slate removing the charges off of my record, I was able to move into a new two-bedroom apartment this past summer. I feel truly blessed.”

Anonymous PCS Client

“I’m homeless and I’ll be able to get me a low income senior citizens apartment now thanks.”

PCS Client Mr. Craig

“It’s helped me a lot. Now, when I have my background checks, it won’t interfere with me getting an apartment or anything that inquires a background check. So, it has changed my life tremendously. I’m 60 years old; I don’t need anything hanging over my head.”

PCS Client Terry

“I can now rent better housing and apply for better jobs.”

PCS Client Brian



OUR WHY



15,000 Expungements Celebration, 2025:
PCS Client Autumn Thompson and family.

CLIENTS

Behind each expungement is a real person: someone who was finally able to get the job from which they had been barred, start a business they had dreamed to start, foster a child in need, secure senior housing, or simply move forward without the shadow of their past restricting their current self.

The impact of expungement extends beyond these milestones. Many clients describe the same feeling after their record is cleared—a weight lifted from their shoulders. For the first time in years, they are able to apply for opportunities without fear that their criminal history will define them.

The stories that follow highlight just a small portion of the lives touched by Project Clean Slate. They are stories of resilience, determination, and the power of second chances. The Project Clean Slate team is honored to do this work every day for Detroiters who deserve to move forward and build brighter futures for themselves and their families.

20,000+ Lives Changed

“I can now move forward with all my plans and dreams that I’ve been waiting to see come to life.”

PCS Client Desean Matthews

17+ years
average time
passed since last
felony conviction

SOURCE: Edmonds, Mira, J.J. Prescott, Sonja Starr, and German Marquez Alcala (2025). "The Expungement Process: Survey Evidence on Applicant Experiences." *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law*, 22(2): 71-124.

NICHOLAS DUBOSE

“You don’t know what you’re being restricted from until you’re free from it.”

Six years ago, Nicholas DuBose stood with his wife, Latricia, and two young daughters in Buffalo, New York, looking out at Niagara Falls. His youngest daughter, Riley, asked him what was on the other side of the falls. He told her it was Canada and that someday, they would go there as a family. “At that time, when I said it, I didn’t have any idea on how I was going to get there,” DuBose said. His criminal record had shut him out of opportunities for years – including his ability to travel freely.

DuBose was working various low-paying jobs, from restaurant work to telemarketing. He had dreams of obtaining better employment, but obstacles appeared at every step of the way. There was one moment he recalled, when he applied to Technicolor, a company that had a reputation for hiring anyone who filled out an application. DuBose’s application was denied, and he remembered the sting of the rejection. An employer that seemingly hired anyone would not hire him.



10,000 Expungements Celebration, 2024: Nicholas DuBose.

“When I finally found jobs, it gave me this unnecessary loyalty to places that were really just supposed to be stepping stones,” DuBose said. “But because they were the ones that took a shot on me, I felt like I had to stay and prove myself. I had blind loyalty because I thought that if I left, I wouldn’t be able to find anything else.”

DuBose and Latricia tailored their lives to the constraints of his criminal record. They could not rent apartments due to background checks, so they bought a home within their means. After continued job rejections, DuBose started his own trucking company so he could operate under his own authority. “You find yourself running from rejection,” he said.

Since Project Clean Slate's creation by former Mayor Duggan in 2016, DuBose followed PCS. When he first applied to the program, he was deemed ineligible due to Michigan law. However, the legislation that Duggan championed took effect in 2021. The changes to the legislation meant DuBose was eligible for expungement. He began the expungement process with Latricia's support.

"My wife and I have been together for 20 years, and we've always been building off each other and reaching new levels. She really dragged me through getting my license back and taking care of all those little legal things I needed to handle. It was always at the top of her mind, and it was on mine too," DuBose said. "So, when I saw the opportunity, I said, 'Let's go for it.' But honestly, it was mostly my wife saying, 'All right, it's time to go out and be an adult now.'"

While the Project Clean Slate team worked on expunging his old convictions, DuBose and Latricia began the process of trying to obtain their foster license so they could care for their 2-year-old nephew. He has autism, and having a stable, long-term home was essential for his long-term development. The DuBose household offered that stability—but the state would not approve them as foster parents because of DuBose's convictions.



Luckily, the expungements were granted in what DuBose called "God's timing." Two months after his expungement, DuBose and Latricia brought their nephew into their home as his approved foster parents. "You don't know what you're being restricted from until you're free from it," DuBose said.

DuBose said that before the ink dried on his signed expungement order, he and his family were enjoying a meal in Canada. They called ahead to ensure he could enter Canada with his newly expunged record, and they crossed the border without any problems. "We didn't do anything special in Canada, but just going was a milestone," DuBose said.



Latricia DuBose is sworn in as a Michigan State Police officer.

From there, the DuBose family continued to reach new milestones. DuBose now works as a forklift mechanic, which he finds very rewarding. Latricia became a Michigan State Police officer, which would not have been possible pre-expungement. “You can’t be knowingly associated with felons, and I was married to one,” Latricia said.

With two new, high-paying jobs, the DuBose family’s opportunities expanded. Their daughters joined gymnastics and karate since the family could now afford transportation and extracurricular activity fees. Their oldest daughter is attending a school trip to France, something that the couple said would have been impossible pre-expungement.

“It already changed a generation within a household,” Latricia said. “His freedom is our financial freedom—it opened up so much of our finances and his open-mindedness. Now he’s free and clear, and we’re making more than we’ve ever made. Our house is getting repaired. It’s an upward movement.”



Latricia DuBose and her daughters at her swearing-in ceremony.



Second Chance Month Job Fair, 2023: DuBose shares his story.



Michigan Shines for Autism Gala, 2023: DuBose and LaBelle.

DuBose began to see the personal changes just as clearly as the financial ones. He recalled the difference he felt when applying for a new job post-expungement.

“I used to have my head down,” DuBose said. “But I walked into that interview totally head up. I was speaking for the first time, I negotiated my salary, and even though it didn't end up at the number that I wanted, the confidence level that it took for me to just step out there was huge. Prior to being expunged, I did interviews with my fingers crossed under the table, just hoping I did good enough for them to hire me, whereas this one was different. I felt like a whole person walking in.” ■

CHRISTOPHER PATE

Christopher Pate had long dreamed of working in the mental health field. Before his expungement, he was earning low wages in a factory job, and his felony record stood in the way of the career he wanted. When he applied for a mental health counseling role with Macomb County, his application was rejected solely because of his criminal record.

“It almost sent me into a depression when they told me I couldn't. I really wanted that job,” Pate said. He regained hope when he learned about Project Clean Slate at an expungement fair. He began the process of clearing his record and eventually made it to his expungement hearing.



“The judge was so nice,” Pate said. “He told me, ‘This conviction is almost 40 years old, have a good life’, and he granted the expungement.” Once his record was clear, Pate reapplied for the Macomb County job that had previously denied him.

When I was able to go back and tell them that I had my record expunged, they were glad to have me,” Pate said.

Pate worked with Macomb County for several years and thrived in the role. Each new job opportunity in the field brought slightly higher pay. After his expungement, his annual income increased by \$10,000, which he said made it easier to financially support his family.

The change in career path also made a meaningful difference for his health. Pate has a heart condition, and moving away from labor-intensive factory work was essential. His current job responsibilities—communicating with clients, delivering medications, and providing support—are far less taxing on his body. “My felony was old, but it hindered me so bad,” Pate said. “Project Clean Slate really helped me.”

STARLIT MACK

Before her record was cleared, Starlit Mack faced barriers that touched nearly every part of her life. Due to a past conviction, she struggled to find stable work, earn fair pay, and participate fully in her children's school activities.

Mack worked in healthcare, a field she deeply cared about, but she was ultimately forced to step away because of her record. Additionally, her record prevented her from attending her children's school field trips. "I was really heartbroken. I wanted to volunteer," she said. After learning about Project Clean Slate through Facebook, Mack decided to register. After her record was clear, Mack applied for jobs without fear of being turned away. She secured a position at Amazon, where she has worked for the past two years. Mack gained stability, insurance benefits for her family, and a renewed sense of confidence. "It's been a life changer," she said.



PCS Client Starlit Mack and children

Now, Mack is looking ahead. With educational benefits through her employer, she plans to continue her education and return to healthcare to pursue her dream of becoming a registered nurse. More than anything, Mack says having a clear record has given her confidence and the freedom to move forward. "It's an awesome program," Mack said. "I wish more Detroiters would take advantage of it."

77%

of expungement recipients with children reported being able to participate more in their children's lives post-expungement

SOURCE: Edmonds, Mira, J.J. Prescott, and Sonja B. Starr (2026). The Self-Reported Effects of Criminal Record Expungement (working paper).

KEVIN

Before receiving an expungement, Kevin described his life as a “stalemate.” Despite having a background in education as a teacher and coach, his record prevented him from finding steady employment and getting approved for housing. He recalled being hired for jobs, only to be let go once his employers ran a background check.

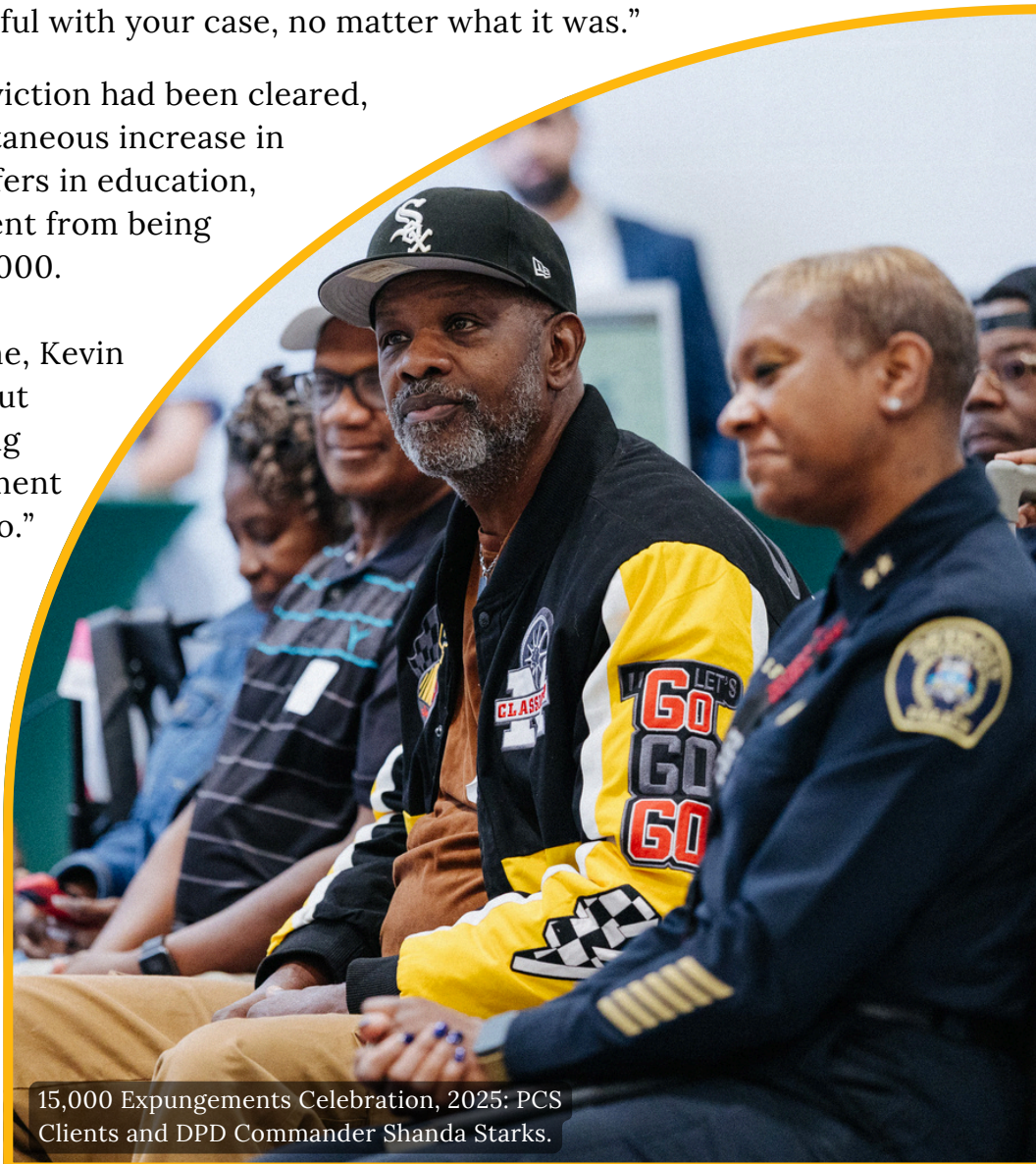
Kevin first learned about Project Clean Slate by attending an expungement fair. He had already attempted to expunge his record using other programs, but they were unable to clear his conviction. He was left feeling discouraged, but he felt something shift when he met with the PCS team.

“The people at Project Clean Slate made me feel comfortable,” Kevin said. “They made you feel like you were going to be successful with your case, no matter what it was.”

When Kevin learned that his conviction had been cleared, he said he experienced an instantaneous increase in opportunities. He received job offers in education, government, and sales, and he went from being unemployed to earning over \$40,000.

Along with the boost to his income, Kevin was able to secure housing without restrictions. His mental well-being improved, and his post-expungement stress level was “pretty much zero.” Kevin said that his expungement gave him the chance to move forward.

“Once your background is cleared, it’s different,” he said, “You’re motivated to go out and do all the things you wanted to do before your record was clean.”



15,000 Expungements Celebration, 2025: PCS Clients and DPD Commander Shanda Starks.

TERRY KING

Terry King had dreams of starting his own construction company, but with a felony on his criminal record, that goal was nearly impossible. Before receiving his expungement, King was working factory jobs and moving from one temporary position to the next. Even with strong skills and experience, many employers turned him away due to their restrictive hiring policies.

King first learned about Project Clean Slate when attending a Detroit at Work class. He registered for the program and found the process to be very straightforward. Only ten months after registering, King's hearing date arrived. Nervous at the thought of returning to court, King was relieved when PCS was able to resolve the matter without a hearing.

With a newly clean record, King has big plans. He plans to finish his schooling and take the test to receive his contractor's and builder's licenses. "I have been studying and going to class," King said. "I had faith that something would work out."

Once King passes his tests, he dreams of opening his own construction company—without the burden of his past conviction that he carried for years. "I can dream bigger," King said. "I can move forward."



PCS Client Terry King

“It’s life changing. I feel so free and relieved that that part of me is no longer there. I’m a new creation.”

Angela Roney-Johnson



15,000 Expungements Celebration, 2025: PCS Client Angela Roney-Johnson and LaBelle.

“ I can now tell my kids that their father is no longer a felon. ”

Anonymous PCS Client



Executive Administrative Assistant Sharron Lewis and PCS Client Jason Jackson.



PCS Client Ronald Wheeler and Lewis.

“ My experience with Project Clean Slate was ...excellent. It helped me out with everything that I need to get done as far as reinventing myself in life. ”

PCS Client Ronald Wheeler

JAMAAL MCKAY



For more than 25 years, Jamaal McKay made a living as a barber. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic slowing down business, he made the decision to pursue a new career as a truck driver. McKay completed the necessary CDL training and began applying for jobs, only to discover that a criminal conviction was hindering his access to employment.

Despite excelling in interviews, McKay was denied multiple job opportunities—including a promising position with the Oakland County Road Commission. He fully expected to move forward in the hiring process but instead was informed that the conviction was preventing that.

The barriers McKay faced due to his conviction extended beyond employment. Even with strong credit, he struggled to find housing because landlords denied his applications. McKay learned about Project Clean Slate through Focus: HOPE's Work Ready program, and he decided to begin the expungement process. "It was very simple," McKay said. "The directions were clear, and they walked me through the whole process."

Post-expungement, McKay's life changed tremendously. He secured higher-paying job opportunities in the trucking industry that had previously been unavailable to him due to his criminal record. With his new financial stability, McKay was able to purchase his first home with his fiancée. In addition to employment and housing benefits, McKay experienced a newfound peace of mind. "It's a great deal relief knowing that I'm clear," McKay said. "I don't have to be wondering about my background. I'm able to live and do as I choose."

LISA FISHER

For many people with criminal records, everyday life can feel like an uphill battle. Lisa Fisher knows this struggle all too well. Through Project Clean Slate, she has successfully expunged all four of her convictions. Reflecting on her expungements, Fisher thought about the obstacles she faced in life due to her record.

Fisher loves her work as a medical assistant, but she said she felt constant stress about her employer discovering her criminal record. “I can’t be authentically me because I feel like I’m hiding something,” she said.

Fisher’s criminal record has also impacted other areas of her life, including housing and volunteer opportunities. “I applied to Meals on Wheels to volunteer, and they wouldn’t accept me. That was devastating,” she said. “I couldn’t work for free, with my own car, my own time—they just wouldn’t have me.”

Despite these setbacks, Fisher continues to push forward while balancing work, school, and guardianship of her granddaughter. She remains hopeful that with a newly cleared record, her stress and anxiety will ease. “I will finally be able to hold my head up, breathe freely, and live like a citizen just like anybody else,” Fisher said.

66%

of expungement recipients who reported positive effects from expungement identified improved psychological wellbeing as a benefit

SOURCE: Edmonds, Mira, J.J. Prescott, and Sonja B. Starr (2026). The Self-Reported Effects of Criminal Record Expungement (working paper).

TOMMY SMALLEY



Tommy Smalley applied for Project Clean Slate two years ago, at a point when he knew he was ready to begin the next chapter of his life. “I wanted to elevate, and my record was a hindrance, so I just went ahead and did it,” Smalley said.

Smalley recalled the most powerful moment in his expungement journey as the time when, during his hearing, he faced the same judge who had once sentenced him. “He had seen where I was before - and to see my life now, he was like, ‘Whoa,’” he recalled.

Today, Smalley's record is completely clear, and the impact has been life changing. He can travel freely and is soon visiting Ghana, Africa, to grow his business opportunities. “It starts with getting your slate clean. Once that’s done, the world opens up,” he said.

Before Smalley's expungement, he described his income as “crumbs.” Today, he works as an executive driver, transporting high-level professionals, business owners, and educators. He earns \$45 an hour—not including generous tips. “I get tips and free food—I’m in the best dining places. It’s a complete game changer,” he said.


In addition to his driving career, Smalley is the founder of Squeaky Media, a radio and TV development business focused on community engagement. Through his work, he places TV monitors in local businesses to display community news and resources.

With his record cleared and his confidence renewed, Smalley's goals continue to grow. He plans to expand his transportation business, build his own fleet, create jobs, and serve his community. “I want to treat people with respect and open doors. There’s a whole new world out there,” he said.

For Smalley, expungement was not only about erasing the past - it was about unlocking a future full of purpose, opportunity, and impact. “I’m at the top of my life right now. The way things are going, my business, my community involvement - this expungement has been a tremendous blessing,” he said. “I’ll take full advantage of it.”

JESSIE BROWN

“ This program matters because it gives people with old convictions a second chance—especially those who want to turn their lives around, who know they did wrong, and who are no longer doing the things they used to do. ”



I don't feel like a criminal anymore.

PCS Client Jessie Brown

DIANE STROZIER



PCS Client Diane Strozier

While planning to apply for senior housing, Diane Strozier discovered that a criminal conviction from 1977 was still on her record. This revelation concerned her, since having a felony blocked her from accessing housing opportunities. Luckily, Strozier registered for Project Clean Slate and was able to successfully clear her record. “The program was perfect,” she said. “It gives you your life back.”

Strozier said gaining access to senior housing was one of the most meaningful benefits of her expungement. Having previously worked in a program that conducted background checks for senior housing applicants, she knew firsthand how a record could prevent someone from securing housing.

Strozier’s expungement also opened doors to employment. She was able to secure a position at Wayne State University where she helped veterans access educational and career resources. “By the time (my employer) did a background check, my record was clean – perfect timing,” she said.

Strozier said her expungement has reduced her stress levels, giving her peace of mind and stability in both housing and career opportunities.

SHANTELL COLLINS

Before Shantell Collins' expungement, she was working at Ford Motor Company, but had to step away due to health problems. That left her dependent on family support, and she felt uncertain about her next steps. Collins said applying for work felt impossible since background checks automatically disqualified her from banks, hospitals, and government jobs. "It was devastating to be rejected from so many things," she said.

Collins' life began to change when a Project Clean Slate staff member reached out to her. At first, Collins wasn't interested in expunging her record - she felt defeated and unsure about the program. The staff member encouraged her to pursue the expungement and stayed in contact with her throughout the process. With the staffer's support and persistence, Collins completed the steps and her expungement was granted. "It felt like a heavy weight was lifted off of me," she said.

Since her expungement, Collins has gained meaningful employment opportunities and independence. She has been employed in a hospital, started a social media career, and provides beauty services like lash extensions for additional income.

With Collins' record cleared, she can now travel freely, access grants to pursue further education in nursing, and confidently plan for her future. "I couldn't have done it on my own," Collins said. "Project Clean Slate was like my fairy godmother."



15,000 Expungements Celebration, June 2025: PCS Client Autumn Thompson and Chief Bettison.

DESEAN MATTHEWS



PCS Client Desean Matthews

For years, Desean Matthews wanted to start his own business. He envisioned creating a nonprofit organization that would provide recreational opportunities for young people and help keep them off the streets. However, every time Matthews tried to secure funding for his idea, his decades-old criminal record stood in the way. “Once [funders] type up your name, it’s like you got this thing behind you,” he said.

Matthews sought out Project Clean Slate’s services after unsuccessfully attempting to complete the expungement process on his own. With support from the program, he received regular updates throughout the process. His expungement was approved virtually, clearing a conviction from the late 1990s without requiring him to appear in court.

“It felt like my life changed right then and there,” Matthews said. With the weight of his record now lifted, he is focused on building the financial foundation needed to launch his nonprofit and work for himself. “I’m ready to move forward now,” Matthews said.

KEITH SMITH

Before his expungement, Keith Smith faced constant obstacles due to his criminal record. “Unemployment was number one,” Smith said. “A lot of doors would slam in my face.”

Most employers rejected him because of his background, and for a time the only work he could find was as a line cook paid under the table. “It was hard to do anything without basic employment,” Smith said. “Without earning any money, it was hard to move forward.”

Smith first learned about Project Clean Slate through an email from the City of Detroit and decided to apply for expungement. PCS successfully cleared four convictions, leaving Smith with a clean record. He remembers the day of his expungement hearing as an impactful moment. “The judge told me, ‘Go out and live your best life, Mr. Smith,’” Smith said. “I’ll never forget that.”

Since then, Smith has experienced significant changes in his life. Today, he works as a supervisor for the City of Detroit. He helps manage operations at Hart Plaza during Detroit’s festival season, and he supervises staff at the Coleman A. Young Recreation Center. He also regained his driver’s license, which had been suspended for more than two decades.

The expungement also had a major impact on his health and mental well-being. “My blood pressure [was] high before,” Smith said. “Now my blood pressure dropped, even without medication. All that stress is gone.”

For Smith, clearing his record opened the door to a future that once felt out of reach. “Everything has been positive since they told me I was clear of all those things,” Smith said.

Now, Smith encourages other Detroiters who may be unsure about seeking expungement to apply for Project Clean Slate. “Go. Trust the process,” Smith said. “Everything will change for you.”



PCS Client Keith Smith

“ I feel great. It's hard to explain—I now feel like a productive citizen. I want to thank you guys. Without you, I'm not sure that I could have done this on my own.”

Anonymous PCS Client



Staff Attorney Shanice Moore and PCS Client Richard Walker.

“ I want to sincerely thank you for the help and compassion you showed in moving my arrest off my record. This has lifted an enormous weight from my life and given me the chance to move forward with hope and dignity.

My family and I are deeply grateful. What you did has made a real difference in my life, and I will never forget the opportunity you helped give me to start fresh. ”

Anonymous PCS Client



PCS Client Deshaun Parker, the 12,000th expungement recipient through Project Clean Slate.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Project Clean Slate shows up for Detroit. From neighborhood events to resource fairs and expungement clinics, our team meets residents in their communities to open the door to second chances. PCS believes everyone deserves an opportunity to move forward, and by bringing services directly into the community, PCS helps Detroiters take meaningful steps toward a brighter future with ease.

This work is rooted in PCS' commitment to the people of Detroit – removing barriers, restoring opportunity, and uplifting Detroit communities. Since the program began, PCS has attended more than 500 events across the city, standing alongside residents and ensuring expungement resources are accessible to those who need them most.



National Expungement Week 2022

During National Expungement Week in September 2022, PCS partnered with the Detroit Pistons to celebrate PCS clients and the City of Detroit's commitment to expungement and second chances. PCS staff, clients, judges, and partners met to celebrate National Expungement Week at the Henry Ford Health Pistons Performance Center. With remarks from former Pistons Head Coach Dwane Casey and current Assistant Coach Jerome Allen, then-Deputy Mayor Todd Bettison, and Judge Tenisha Yancey, guests indulged in camaraderie and conversation.



Peacenic (2022-2025)

For four years straight, PCS has attended the annual summer Peacenic. The annual event is a collective gathering of community and law enforcement to share food, fellowship, and fun in the name of peace. In 2022, 2023, and 2024, the US Attorney's Office - Eastern District of Michigan coordinated the Peacenic. In 2025, the torch was passed to the City of Detroit and Detroit Police Department who continued the tradition. Year after year, PCS collaborates with internal and external agencies to offer free expungement services to Detroiters.

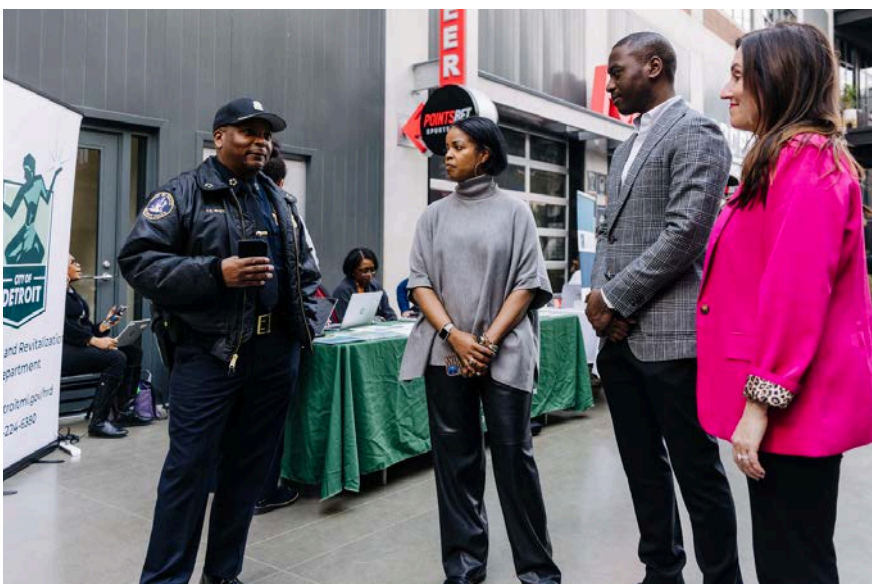


Second Chance Summit 2024

In March 2024, PCS attended the Second Chance Summit hosted by the Detroit Pistons at Little Caesars Arena. Collaboration between the Detroit Pistons, National Basketball Social Justice Coalition, Safe & Just Michigan, dozens of City of Detroit departments, the Michigan Department of Attorney General, the U.S. Attorney's Office - Eastern District of Michigan, and several other resource groups, hundreds of individuals were served.

Speakers at the press conference included Social Justice Coalition Executive Director James Cadogan, Platinum Equity Partner Mark Barnhill, former US Attorney-Eastern District of Michigan Dawn Ison, Detroit Pistons Vice Chairman Arn Tellum, and former Mayor Duggan.

Hundreds of people lined up to see PCS and other partners, and in the end, went home with answers to a brighter future.



Detroit at Work

In August 2025, Project Clean Slate expanded its in-person support across Detroit by introducing the creation of a new position—PCS Detroit at Work Liaison. This team member rotates between multiple Detroit at Work centers to assist community members in person. Assistance is provided regarding registration, ID submission, and answering client questions.

Detroit at Work is a critical partner of PCS. Offering space for the Liaison has been especially helpful for Detroiters who may not be comfortable navigating online systems. By offering face-to-face assistance at Detroit at Work locations across the city, residents can access services close to home and receive in-person guidance through the process.



Mathis Expungement Clinic 2025

In September 2025, Project Clean Slate held an expungement clinic hosted by Judge Greg Mathis at the Mathis Community Center. With hundreds in attendance, Judge Mathis spoke to the crowd, along with then-City Council President Mary Sheffield, Councilmember Angela Whitfield-Calloway, Attorney Jade Mathis, and Rappers Icewear Vezzo and Trick Trick. With assistance from the Detroit Police Department, PCS was able to help 313 Detroiters with expungement.



18,000-Sheffield Expungement Clinic 2025

In October 2025, PCS held an expungement clinic hosted by then-City Council President and current Mayor Sheffield. PCS spent the day working with clients on two key goals: (1) updating errors on criminal history records so clients could begin the process of expungement; and (2) preparing expungement applications for clients to sign.

The Detroit Police Department provided free fingerprinting services, a required part of expungement.

At the clinic, Mayor Sheffield announced that PCS reached a milestone of 18,000 convictions expunged for Detroiters.



Wayne State University Law Clinic 2026

In February 2026, PCS attended the Wayne State University Law School's annual Expungement Clinic, where more than 600 Michiganders pre-registered for assistance. Law students from Wayne State University, alongside partners Safe & Just Michigan, the Detroit Police Department, and PCS worked tirelessly to connect clients with second chance resources and guide them through the expungement process. The event not only helped hundreds of people take steps toward clearing their records but also gave law students – America's future lawyers – valuable, hands-on experience learning what it takes to make expungement possible.



GIVING BACK

The Project Clean Slate team is committed to engaging with the community it serves by volunteering. Partnerships with organizations like Focus: Hope, Read to a Child, and Focus Detroit enable PCS to actively give back to Detroit.



SPECIAL THANKS

In addition to the partners and funders that support Project Clean Slate, it is important to acknowledge entities without whom this report would not be possible.



PCS extends sincere thanks to the Michigan Justice Fund (MJF) for generously funding this Impact Report and providing ongoing support of PCS' work. MJF's continued partnership and unwavering commitment to second chances has helped PCS expand its impact and advance its mission.



PCS thanks the research team at the University of Michigan Law School: J.J. Prescott, Mira Edmonds, German Marquez Alcala, and Ritsa Giannakas; and Sonja Starr from the University of Chicago Law School. The work the research team has done and its dedication to researching the benefits and impact of expungement makes this report possible. PCS is grateful for the team's contributions to this report and expungement generally. More importantly, PCS appreciates their expertise, collaboration, and commitment to this important work.



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