



Legislation Summary:

An Act relative to sealing juvenile records and expungement of court records

Initial bill number: [S944/H2309](#) (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsors: Sen. Karen Spilka, Rep. Kay Khan

This bill reduces time for youthful offenses to be sealed from three years to one year as long as an individual has stayed out of trouble, and doesn't count minor motor vehicle offenses. It also provides for expungement of juvenile records after three more years of a clean record, with certain parameters. Dismissed cases will lead to automatic sealing unless requested not to be sealed. This bill also allows for expungement of court records for those found falsely accused or innocent.

Why this is good: Young people just starting out are kept from getting jobs and getting loans to go to school if they have records that last such a long time. This will give many people a second chance. States where there are minimal administrative barriers to sealing and/or expungement of juvenile records have [significantly reduced re-arrest/recidivism rates](#) and increased college graduation and incomes as young people transition to adulthood. Currently, [sealing a record is difficult](#) according to the Massachusetts Bar Association and records are almost never expunged, or erased. [Various states](#) deal with sealing and expungement in different ways. Society [benefits from expunged records](#) by making it easier for individuals to find work and pay taxes.

Bottom Line: The development of [the adolescent brain](#) doesn't reach maturity until the early 20s. Crime rates and abuse of alcohol are highest for young males ages 15 to 19 showing that they are most susceptible to making bad decisions, including criminal behavior, during this time of their development. By making it possible to seal or expunge records for this high-risk population makes it more likely they turn their lives around so there are fewer barriers to finding jobs, going to college, or taking out loans. This reduces the likelihood for them to become career criminals.