

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

This bill contains a variety of reforms to the state's expungement laws. The bill: expands judicial expungement authority over juvenile expungements; requires business screening records to keep their criminal records current; allows for eviction records to be expunged at the time of judgment; expands the scope of statutory expungement in chapter 609A; creates a path to expungement without petitioning the court; amends the factors for a court to consider in granting a statutory expungement; amends the law governing access to expunged records; and creates additional notice requirements for expungement orders.

Section

- 1 Expungement.** Amends the juvenile records expungement statute to give courts authority to expunge all records relating to the arrest and delinquency proceedings, rather than just the adjudication of delinquency. This is in response to the decision of the Minnesota Supreme Court in the *J.J.P.* case, 831 N.W.2d 260 (Minn. 2013), in which it interpreted the statute as applicable only to the adjudication record and not additional documents, such as arrest and investigative records. The most significant effect of this amendment would be to give courts authority to expunge these delinquency records when held by executive branch entities. In addition, the standard to be applied by the court is more clearly delineated and a list of factors to be considered is included.

Sharing of expunged juvenile records between criminal justice agencies is authorized, consistent with the new provisions governing adult records in section 7, and the statute governing appeals of adult expungements would apply.

Section

- 2** **Deletion of expunged records.** Amends the law governing business screening services to require a business screening service that knows a criminal record has been sealed, expunged, or is the subject of a pardon to promptly delete the record. While this may be implied under current law, it is not explicitly stated (in contrast, there is specific language in Minnesota Statutes, section 504B.241, subdivision 4, governing residential tenant screening services).
- 3** **Evictions.** Amends the eviction law to explicitly give the court authority to expunge records relating to the action at the time judgment is entered or after that time in cases where the defendant prevailed. The effect of this amendment is to allow the defendant to move for an expungement as part of the eviction proceeding, rather than bringing a separate petition or motion under Minnesota Statutes, section 484.014, which is the general law governing expungement of eviction records.
- 4** **Statutory expungement.** Amends the general law governing the circumstances under which criminal records may be expunged. Under current law, an expungement petition may be brought only when authorized under law. The grounds for an order under Minnesota Statutes, section 609A.02, include certain controlled substance offenses, juveniles prosecuted as adults, and criminal proceedings resolved in favor of the petitioner. Under paragraph (a), three new categories of criminal proceedings or convictions are added:

- petitioner has successfully completed the terms of a diversion program or stay of adjudication and has not been charged with a new crime for at least *two* years since completion of the program or stay of adjudication;
- petitioner was convicted of or received a stayed sentence for a petty misdemeanor, misdemeanor, or gross misdemeanor and has not been convicted of a new crime for at least *five* years since discharge of the sentence; or
- petitioner was convicted of or received a stayed sentence for a felony violation of an offense listed in paragraph (b) and has not been convicted of a new crime for at least *eight* years since discharge of the sentence.

Paragraph (b) lists the felonies that would be eligible for expungement. It includes most offenses that are a severity level 1 or 2 under the Sentencing Guidelines, other than (1) certain person offenses and (2) those that are crimes of violence for purposes of permit to carry disqualifications and codified in chapter 609.

- 5** **Petitionless expungement.** Provides for expungement without the filing of a petition in certain cases where the prosecutor agrees to the sealing of a criminal record, unless the court determines that the interests of public safety in keeping the record outweigh the disadvantages to the subject. It would apply to the categories of persons authorized to seek an expungement under Minnesota Statutes, section 609A.02, subdivision 3 (see section 4). A victim notification requirement is included.

Section

6 Nature of remedy; standard. Amends the law governing the standards for granting an expungement. The general rule under current law is that the petitioner has the burden of proving by clear and convincing evidence that expungement would yield a benefit to the petitioner commensurate with the disadvantages to the public and public safety of sealing the record and burdening the court and other authorities. However, in cases where the proceedings were resolved in favor of the petitioner, the burden of proof switches to the agency or jurisdiction whose records would be affected. This amendment would add cases where the petitioner has successfully completed the terms of a diversion program or stay of adjudication to the situations where the agency has the burden of proof. For the other new categories in section 4, the petitioner would continue to have the burden of proof. This section also includes additional factors to be considered by the court in making its determination. New language clarifies that an expungement order seals a record, regardless of whether it would otherwise be public law enforcement or criminal history data or public under other law.

Prohibits expunged records from being introduced in civil litigation against an employer or landlord for alleged misconduct of an employee or tenant, if the records were expunged before the occurrence giving rise to the civil action.

7 Limitations on statutory expungement. Amends the law governing access to expunged records. New language allows the exchange of expunged records between criminal justice agencies, similar to the current authority for the exchange of law enforcement data under Minnesota Statutes, section 13.82, subdivision 24. This replaces and expands current law, which authorizes opening an expunged record for a criminal investigation, prosecution, or sentencing but requires an ex parte court order.

Under current law, if law enforcement, prosecution, or corrections authorities request access to a record subject to an expungement order, they must be informed of the existence of the record and the right to obtain access to it with a court order. This language is modified, consistent with the new provision allowing the exchange of expunged records, to require an agency or jurisdiction subject to an order to maintain the record in a manner that provides access by a criminal justice agency but informs the recipient that the record is sealed. If a request is made by the commissioner of human services, the commissioner must be notified of the existence of the record and of the right to obtain access to it. Language is added explicitly stating that an expunged record remains subject to the expungement order in the hands of the person receiving it.

Effective date. Applies to records expunged on or after August 1, 2014.

8 Distribution and confirmation of expungement order. Expands the current requirements related to distribution of expungement orders to require court administrators to notify petitioners of the entities that received the order and to require those entities to send a letter to the petitioner confirming that the record is expunged. Data on the petitioners in these letters is classified as private data.