



Ohio Revised Code

Section 2953.38 [Amended and renumbered as R.C. 2953.36 by S.B. 288, 134th General Assembly, effective 4/4/2023] Expungement of certain convictions for victims of human trafficking.

Effective: April 8, 2019

Legislation: House Bill 425 - 132nd General Assembly

(A) As used in this section:

- (1) "Expunge" means to destroy, delete, or erase a record as appropriate for the record's physical or electronic form or characteristic so that the record is permanently irretrievable.
- (2) "Prosecutor" has the same meaning as in section 2953.31 of the Revised Code.
- (3) "Record of conviction" means any record related to a conviction of or plea of guilty to an offense.
- (4) "Victim of human trafficking" means a person who is or was a victim of a violation of section 2905.32 of the Revised Code, regardless of whether anyone has been convicted of a violation of that section or of any other section for victimizing the person.

(B) Any person who is or was convicted of a violation of section 2907.24, 2907.241, or 2907.25 of the Revised Code may apply to the sentencing court for the expungement of the record of conviction of any offense, other than a record of conviction of a violation of section 2903.01, 2903.02, or 2907.02 of the Revised Code, the person's participation in which was a result of the person having been a victim of human trafficking. The person may file the application at any time. The application may request an order to expunge the record of conviction for more than one offense, but if it does, the court shall consider the request for each offense separately as if a separate application had been made for each offense and all references in divisions (B) to (H) of this section to "the offense" or "that offense" mean each of those offenses that are the subject of the application. The application shall do all of the following:

- (1) Identify the applicant, the offense for which the expungement is sought, the date of the



conviction of that offense, and the court in which the conviction occurred;

(2) Describe the evidence and provide copies of any documentation showing that the person is entitled to relief under this section;

(3) Include a request for expungement of the record of conviction of that offense under this section.

(C) The court may deny an application made under division (B) of this section if it finds that the application fails to assert grounds on which relief may be granted.

(D) If the court does not deny an application under division (C) of this section, it shall set a date for a hearing and shall notify the prosecutor for the case from which the record of conviction resulted of the hearing on the application. The prosecutor may object to the granting of the application by filing an objection with the court prior to the date set for the hearing. The prosecutor shall specify in the objection the reasons for believing a denial of the application is justified. The court may direct its regular probation officer, a state probation officer, or the department of probation of the county in which the applicant resides to make inquiries and written reports as the court requires concerning the applicant.

(E)(1) At the hearing held under division (D) of this section, the court shall do both of the following:

(a) If the prosecutor has filed an objection, consider the reasons against granting the application specified by the prosecutor in the objection;

(b) Determine whether the applicant has demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that the applicant's participation in the offense that is the subject of the application was a result of the applicant having been a victim of human trafficking.

(2) If the court at the hearing held under division (D) of this section determines that the applicant's participation in the offense that is the subject of the application was a result of the applicant having been a victim of human trafficking and if that subject offense is a felony of the first or second degree, the court at the hearing also shall consider all of the following factors and, upon consideration of the factors, shall determine whether the interests of the applicant in having the



record of the conviction of that offense expunged are outweighed by any legitimate needs of the government to maintain that record of conviction:

- (a) The degree of duress under which the applicant acted in committing the subject offense, including, but not limited to, the history of the use of force or threatened use of force against the applicant or another person, whether the applicant's judgment or control was impaired by the administration to the applicant of any intoxicant, drug, or controlled substance, and the threat of withholding from the applicant food, water, or any drug;
 - (b) The seriousness of the subject offense;
 - (c) The relative degree of physical harm done to any person in the commission of the subject offense;
 - (d) The length of time that has expired since the commission of the subject offense;
 - (e) Whether the prosecutor represents to the court that criminal proceedings are likely to still be initiated against the applicant for a felony offense for which the period of limitations has not expired;
 - (f) Whether the applicant at the time of the hearing is subject to supervision as a result of the subject offense.
- (F) If after a hearing held under division (D) of this section the court finds that the applicant has demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that the applicant's participation in the offense that is the subject of the application was the result of the applicant having been a victim of human trafficking, and, if the offense that is the subject of the application is a felony of the first or second degree, after consideration of the factors required under division (E)(2) of this section, it finds that the interests of the applicant in having the record of the conviction of that offense expunged are not outweighed by any legitimate needs of the government to maintain that record of conviction, the court shall grant the application and order that the record of conviction be expunged.
- (G)(1) The court shall send notice of the order of expungement issued under division (F) of this



section to each public office or agency that the court has reason to believe may have an official record pertaining to the case if the court, after complying with division (E) of this section, determines both of the following:

(a) That the applicant has been convicted of a violation of section 2907.24, 2907.241, or 2907.25 of the Revised Code;

(b) That the interests of the applicant in having the records pertaining to the applicant's conviction expunged are not outweighed by any legitimate needs of the government to maintain those records.

(2) The proceedings in the case that is the subject of an order of expungement issued under division (F) of this section shall be considered not to have occurred and the conviction of the person who is the subject of the proceedings shall be expunged. The record of the conviction shall not be used for any purpose, including, but not limited to, a criminal records check under section 109.572 of the Revised Code. The applicant may, and the court shall, reply that no record exists with respect to the applicant upon any inquiry into the matter.

(H) Upon the filing of an application under this section, the applicant, unless indigent, shall pay a fee of fifty dollars. The court shall pay thirty dollars of the fee into the state treasury and shall pay twenty dollars of the fee into the county general revenue fund.