

WHEREAS, The General Assembly has expressed its intent in Article 27, § 641 of the Annotated Code of Maryland that a probation before judgment may not be considered a conviction for purposes of any disqualification or disability imposed by law because of a conviction; and

WHEREAS, A court may only impose a probation before judgment for an offense if it finds that the best interests of the person and the welfare of the people of the State would be served by such an order; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

**Article 27 – Crimes and Punishments**

641.

(a) (1) (i) 1. Whenever a person accused of a crime pleads guilty or nolo contendere or is found guilty of an offense, a court exercising criminal jurisdiction, if satisfied that the best interests of the person and the welfare of the people of the State would be served thereby, and with the written consent of the person after determination of guilt or acceptance of a nolo contendere plea, may stay the entering of judgment, defer further proceedings, and place the person on probation subject to reasonable terms and conditions as appropriate. The terms and conditions may include ordering the person to pay a fine or pecuniary penalty to the State, or to make restitution, but before the court orders a fine, pecuniary penalty, or restitution the person is entitled to notice and a hearing to determine the amount of the fine, pecuniary penalty, or restitution, what payment will be required, and how payment will be made. The terms and conditions also may include any type of rehabilitation program or clinic, or similar program, or the parks program or voluntary hospital program.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1) of this subsection, a court may not stay the entering of judgment and place a person on probation for a violation of any provision of § 21-902 of the Transportation Article if the person has been convicted under, or has been placed on probation under this section after being charged with a violation of, § 21-902 of the Transportation Article within the preceding 5 years.

(3) Notwithstanding paragraph (1) of this subsection, a court may not stay the entering of judgment and place a person on probation for a second or subsequent controlled dangerous substance offense under §§ 276 through 303 of this article.

(c) Upon fulfillment of the terms and conditions of probation, the court shall discharge the person from probation. The discharge is final disposition of the matter. Discharge of a person under this section shall be without judgment of conviction and is not a conviction for purposes of any disqualification or disability imposed by law because of conviction of crime.