

Testimony of Michael Askew, Director of Recovery Advocacy

Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery
Before the Judiciary Committee
March 10, 2021

Co-Chairs Sen. Winfield & Rep. Stafstrom; Ranking Members Sen. Kissel & Rep. Fishbein; and esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee, it's an honor to sit before you today.

I am Michael Askew, Director of Recovery Advocacy, for the Connecticut Community for Addition Recovery (CCAR) and I am offering testimony in support of:

S.B. No. 1019 *AN ACT CONCERNING THE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES, ERASURE OF CRIMINAL RECORDS FOR CERTAIN MISDEMEANOR AND FELONY OFFENSES, PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON ERASED CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD INFORMATION AND CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION WITH RESPECT TO MISDEMEANOR SENTENCES.*

I support S.B. 1019 for the automatic erasure of criminal records. We've seen imprisonment have real consequences in one's life, disproportionately hurting Black and brown communities in our state, and burdening hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents with a criminal record. When I was released from prison, barriers presented themselves to employment, housing, and other opportunities. Everyone use background checks and they present a barrier. Clean Slate will automatically expunge the records of people who have served their time, returned to our communities, and remained crime-free. A criminal record should not be a lifetime sentence.

I support S.B. 987 987, AN ACT CONCERNING REINVESTMENT THROUGH A REDUCION IN CORRECTION FACILITY POPULATION INTO REENTRY AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES AND PROGRAMS.

During Governor Lamont campaign he promised to be a criminal-justice reformer. He stated, "It is so important, the right thing to do, and the smart thing to do." "This is something we are going to do in a serious way."

With closing Northern, it's apparent that there will be a savings of \$17M. Who benefits? The state, by putting in a pot of money that already has \$3.1B or bring justice reinvestment dollars back to the communities where people who were harmed by the "Just Us" system. Now is the time! Who's coming out of those prison and need help the most. BIPOC.

Mass Incarceration has happened because of systemic racism. Lack of Employment, Housing Discrimination, Incarceration, Drug Arrest, among many others. Systemic Racism is at the front end of the Criminal Justice System. It's in the Prison System, and it's in ReEntry. Let's Provide more halfway houses, and residential programs. Let's have a different mentality as to how this issue needs to be supported.

Corrections budget is around \$640M. With the closing of prisons, and 8,000 citizens being released, where is the savings going? Northern had 50 citizens incarcerated, 175 officers on payroll. Really? n, including reentry coordination, housing, and hiring of community health workers for people leaving incarceration. Are we really spending our money wisely?

May we prepare ourselves for what may be a huge undertaking in making sure our country and the great state of Connecticut is safe and ready if you pass this bill.

Thanks for your time and consideration in my testimony.

Sincerely,

Michael Askew