

Written Testimony Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Committee on Judiciary in support of Raised Senate Bill 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

To the Honorable Senator Winfield, the Honorable Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Sr. Elaine Betoncourt and I am a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of West Hartford CT. I am also a member of the Collaborative Center for Justice and the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance. I currently reside in Hartford and have lived here for 3 years; before that, I lived in East Hartford for 14 years. As a person of faith and in recognition of our common humanity, I believe people who have erred and committed a crime deserve a second chance and ought not continue to be punished by a criminal charge record which denies them opportunities to make a fresh start..

I have a family member who has been incarcerated on a couple of occasions. I have witnessed firsthand how hard it was for him to get a decent job to support his family and how discouraged he became and how that led to recidivism.

The consequences of having a criminal record, especially a felony conviction, impacts not only the individual and his family, but also the entire nation because of the way it drains the economy, and how it disproportionately targets communities of color. According to the FBI, 30% of American adults have some sort of criminal record. These records haunt people for the rest of their lives, locking people out of opportunities to meet their basic human needs. Nationally, most employers, landlords, and colleges use background checks in recruitment efforts. Here in Connecticut, 25% - 31% of Black men have a felony conviction and are therefore greatly disadvantaged, helpless and kept in poverty

I support the clean slate bill raised in the Judiciary Committee (S.B. 1019). Passing a real, robust, inclusive clean slate bill would allow people who have already been punished to support themselves, provide for their families, and contribute to their communities. Clean slate would automatically expunge the criminal records of people who have returned to outside society and remained crime free for a period of time.

I support Raised Senate Bill No. 1019 because it would:

- Include all misdemeanors and Class C, D, and E felonies (convictions for 10 years or less), excluding convictions for sex crimes and family violence
- Apply retroactively
- Include antidiscrimination protections for people with records

Poor People Are Targeted & Kept Poor. Nearly half the people in Connecticut's shelters have been incarcerated. . A criminal record reduces a job seeker's chance of getting a callback or job offer by nearly 50 percent. Nearly half of American children now have at least one parent with a criminal record. This needs to change.

I support SB1019 bill raised in the Judiciary committee and ask that it be brought to the full legislature.

Sincerely,

Sr. Elaine Betoncourt CSJ

35 Freeman Street

Hartford CT 06114