



Joseph P. Ganim  
Mayor

# City of Bridgeport

# MiRA

Mayor's Initiative for Re-entry Affairs

999 Broad Street, Bridgeport, CT 06604  
[bridgeportct.gov/MIRA](http://bridgeportct.gov/MIRA)

Earl Bloodworth  
Director

Margaret E. Morton Government Center  
999 Broad Street  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
203-330-4235 (Main Ofc. Phone)  
Please send all info to email below:  
[MIRA.Service@BridgeportCT.Gov](mailto:MIRA.Service@BridgeportCT.Gov)

Testimony for Public Hearing; Judiciary Committee

March 10, 2021

Earl Bloodworth

999 Broad St Bridgeport, CT 06604

Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 1019 An Act Concerning the Board of Pardons and Paroles, Erasure of Criminal Records for Certain Misdemeanor and Felony Offenses and Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Erased Criminal History Record Information for Public Hearing with the Judiciary Committee March 10, 2021

Good morning Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Rep. Fishbein ranking members Kissel and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Earl Bloodworth and I am the Director for the City of Bridgeport's Reentry Department overseeing the Mayor's Initiative for Reentry Affairs (MIRA) representing the City of Bridgeport's Chief Administration Office. I am also the cochair for the Greater New Haven Reentry Round Table. I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to testify before the Judiciary Committee.

I am here to speak about my support for **Raised S.B. No. 1019** (Clean Slate).

Many, myself included, often complain about the ordinariness of our lives and maintenance of that life. These things that we complain about and take for granted, many, formerly incarcerated people strive for daily and are denied. This easily could have been my life had one, particular thing gone differently when I was young many years ago. Many Connecticut residents that have served their sentenced time for the crime they committed are not afforded the ordinariness of life that we without any criminal record take for granted. Their criminal record is essentially a scarlet letter that follows them throughout their life ruining ordinary things like stable and livable wage employment. It ruins the possibility of stable and safe housing.

Reintegrating back into the community of Connecticut is nearly impossible if not improbable for those with a criminal record. These individuals face well over 500 legal barriers, stigmatization, and other various collateral consequences inhibiting or prohibiting their ability to meet their basic needs. This makes it extremely difficult for many of those who never had a real first chance to leverage their second chance opportunity. If we as a community are sincere about Connecticut's second chance society status, we should be making it easier for them to reintegrate into society and support themselves and their



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families. Connecticut can reduce these collateral consequences and make our state safer and stronger by expanding the scope of state anti-discrimination laws through using individualized assessments and ending blanket bans. Per the ACLU's Smart Justice study, 57 percent of Connecticut voters support a law prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, education, insurance, and credit based on a person's criminal history.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH CITY OF DETROIT'S CLEAN SLATE DEPARTMENT:

- For every \$1 spent on Project Clean Slate, there is a potential \$3.70 return in the form of potential annualized wage gains, creating local, state, and federal employment tax revenue.
- When compared to job training, another common public investment in economic growth, the financial returns on expungement programs outpace job training by a factor of 3.8 to 1.
- 81% of Detroiters apply for expungement to remove the stigma associated with having a criminal record.
- 48% of expungement applicants learned about Project Clean Slate through a friend or family member.

Many men and women are returning to our communities after making a mistake, dealing with undiagnosed and untreated trauma, mental health issues, and substance abuse disease. These men and women are looking for a fresh start after serving their time. Many want to go to school, but are ineligible to receive financial aid or qualify for the Pell Grant depending on their crime. Many want to find a stable home to live in, rest their head and raise their families. They want to go to their places of worship unbothered. They want to have gainful employment so they can pay taxes like everyone else. They want to be able to complain about the maintenance of their ordinary lives. As I have stated, returning citizens face many obstacles that keep them from ordinary life complaints because they never hear back from prospective employers. Or they are hired and fired two weeks later after their background check comes back. Many also have issues getting affordable and safe housing due to their record. If you serve your time, your record should not hold you back from an ordinary or extraordinary life.

	Unemployment rate general population	Unemployment rate formerly incarcerated
Black women	6.4%	43.6%
Black men	7.7%	35.2%
White women	4.3%	23.2%
White men	4.3%	18.4%

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html#recommendations>



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This rate, which surpasses anything Americans have experienced since the height of the Great Depression, is especially striking given the report's other findings:

- Formerly incarcerated people are more likely than the average Americans to want to work;
- People of color and women face the worst "penalties" in the job market after going to prison, making historical inequalities in labor force even worse;
- Unemployment is highest for people released in the last two years, when they are most vulnerable to re-incarceration

"These high unemployment rates reflect public will, policy, and practice – not differences in aspirations," said author Lucius Couloute. In the report, he lays out policy solutions for closing this vast employment gap, including:

- A temporary basic income for formerly incarcerated people after their release;
- Automatic mechanisms for criminal record expungement;
- Occupational licensing reform at the state and industry levels.

I have a college degree myself with no criminal record and I experienced being unemployed or under employed for nearly two years. Employment, training, and other assistance needs to be supported not only financially, but via policy as well. We are working with this population in the areas of economic development, education, housing, health and political well-being here in Connecticut. This is exactly the population for which the City of Bridgeport's MIRA department was explicitly commissioned to support and empower; their underserved needs scream for attention via civic engagement of our elected officials and non-profit organizations.

Thank you for your valuable time and consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Earl Bloodworth

Sincerely,

Earl L. R. Bloodworth

Director of Reentry

M.I.R.A.

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