

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 Linda Bronstein. I am a white woman, over 65, who has lived in West Hartford for most of my life and continue to live there. I am a member of First Church of Christ West Hartford, which is an active member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA).

I write today to express my strong support of the Judiciary Committee's Raised Senate Bill No. 1019. This bill is an important piece of what is necessary to undo the harm done in recent decades by mass incarceration and racially biased policing, conviction, and sentencing.

Here in Connecticut, at least 25% of Black men have a felony conviction. Nationally, almost half of all children have at least one parent who has a criminal record. A history of incarceration has the lifelong effect of locking people out of employment opportunities, housing opportunities, and even educational opportunities. A foolish act done as a teen-ager or young adult can cripple a person's life long after he or she has completed a sentence and supposedly paid the debt to society. The current process of applying for pardon or expungement is complicated and inequitable. Too few people are able to accomplish applying, and too few applications are granted.

Raised Senate Bill No. 1019 would provide automatic expungement of the criminal record for all misdemeanors and for class C, D, and E felonies (excluding sex crimes and family violence) when a person who has been released from incarceration remains crime-free for a specified period of time. It would apply retroactively, and it includes anti-discrimination provisions for those whose criminal records have not yet been expunged. All of these provisions are important so as to give the benefit of a "clean slate" to as many people as possible.

As a white senior citizen living in the suburbs, I am not afraid of passing a robust, inclusive clean slate bill. I am afraid of the consequences of not passing a bill such as this, and continuing along our current path, which robs large segments of our community of hope for the future and opportunity to make something of themselves.

I urge you to support Raised Senate Bill No. 1019.

Sincerely,

Linda Bronstein, 104 Montclair Dr., West Hartford, CT 06107