

Judiciary Committee

Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
S.B. 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 Sentence.

Submitted by: Madeline Granato, Policy Director
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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide nonprofit that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-seven years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate for policy solutions to enhance women's economic security, combat discrimination, and increase gender equity in our state.

CWEALF also serves as an advocacy partner to Secure Jobs 2.0, multiyear program led by the Melville Charitable Trust and other philanthropic partners to increase the income of families transitioning out of homelessness by connecting them to the education, training, and supports they need to secure and maintain stable employment. In the program's pilot, 87% of participating households were female headed.

CWEALF urges the Committee to support *S.B. 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 Sentence.*

Women are the fastest growing incarcerated population in the United States. Women of color are significantly overrepresented in the criminal justice system: African American and Hispanic women are nearly twice as likely to be incarcerated than white women.¹ More than half of women incarcerated in prisons and jails (56%) are incarcerated for drug or property offenses. Two-thirds of women who are incarcerated in a state prison are mothers of a minor child.² History of a criminal conviction remains a significant barrier for women to reach economic stability for themselves and their families.

Ninety-five percent (95%) of people who are incarcerated in the United States will return to society; however, history of a criminal conviction places more than 550 legal barriers in

¹ The Sentencing Project: Incarcerated Women and Girls. Retrieved from: <https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Incarcerated-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

² ACLU: Facts about the over-incarceration of women in the United States. Retrieved from: <https://www.aclu.org/other/facts-about-over-incarceration-women-united-states>

their path to secure housing, employment and civic participation.³ People with a criminal record are more likely to face homelessness, unemployment and poverty.

Connecticut residents agree that people with a criminal record deserve a second chance: 85% of Connecticut voters, including 72% of Republicans, agree that people who have been convicted of a crime and have served their sentence should not have their prison sentence held against them.⁴

CWEALF urges the Committee to support S.B. 1019 to advance the economic security and stability of women with a criminal record. Thank you.

³ National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction. Retrieved from: https://niccc.csjusticecenter.org/database/results/?jurisdiction=260&consequence_category=&narrow_category=&triggering_offense_category=&consequence_type=&duration_category=&page_number=1

⁴ ACLU of Connecticut: Criminal Justice Poll 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.acluct.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/2020-2-19_aclu_ct_smart_justice_polling_release_topline_-_clean_slate.pdf