

March 10, 2021

Written Testimony submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Committee on Judiciary in **Support of Senate Bill 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:

I am the Intern Minister of the Unitarian Society of Hartford, a Unitarian Universalist congregation with over 200 members from around the region, a 3rd year Seminarian at the Starr King School for the Ministry, the CEO and Founder of DivaStyle Ministry, and one of the original members of the Connecticut Pardon Team with its Founder, former Norwich City Councilwoman Jacqueline Plowden Caron in 2004.

When we started holding informational sessions to give affected persons information on the Pardon Process, it wasn't simple, clear, or very easy to apply for a pardon. We leaned heavily on Jackie's personal experience to help guide others through the process and we worked hard to help them remain hopeful about reclaiming their lives and moving forward in a positive manner.

The Pardon process gives hope and a way forward for people who have successfully completed their period of incarceration, their parole and / or probation, and have gone above and beyond in not just staying out of trouble, but in giving back to their community. The people who attended our information sessions were grocery store clerks, administrative assistants, teachers, managers, corporate directors, entrepreneurs, and elected officials – all looking for help.

A criminal record is a serious hurdle to overcome and passing Senate Bill 1019 will help people who need and deserve a second chance to receive one.

The provisions of the bill, including the orientation program for eligible inmates, formal training for members of the Board of Pardons and Parole, and the extremely important provisions regarding expungement and erasure of not only the criminal record, but copies of those records that may be held by background screening providers or similar data-based services and companies that have purchased records of criminal matters also be prohibited from disclosing those records are critically important.

We all make mistakes – we perfectly imperfect human beings mess up sometimes. A mistake that results in a criminal record should NOT become a life sentence.

An individual who applies themselves and completes the arduous process of applying for and receiving a Pardon should not be forced to deal with the sword over their heads in the form of old records that are not updated or expunged when their Pardon is received.

Passing Senate Bill 1019 will generate a new sense of hope for those members of our communities who work for and deserve a second chance and a Clean Slate with which to move forward in their lives and to fulfill their potential as human beings.

I strongly encourage you to approve Senate Bill 1019.

With faith and love,

Dianne M. Daniels, Candidate Minister, Unitarian Universalist Faith
Intern Minister, Unitarian Society of Hartford