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Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, please consider my testimony submitted today, March 10, 2021, I oppose S.B. 1019.

My name is Bob De Cosmo and I manage both a consumer reporting agency called *TenantTracks* and the *CT Property Owners Alliance*, a housing advocacy organization. Data from the approximate 12,000 tenant screening reports *TenantTracks* ran for in 2019 provides the following;

-) 94.8% of all rental applicants had no criminal activity
-) 97.8 had 3 or fewer convictions
-) BUT 1.1% had 10 or more

This proposal puts too much risk on the public if we are erasing criminal records based solely on the passage of time from the date of conviction. There's no proof the criminal has reformed with such little time back into society. Further, 1019 doesn't protect the public from career criminals, those with 10 or more records.

Please allow me to get into other aspects of why this proposal will fail to achieve its intent, please consider;

1.) **THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES** for the reentry population...HOWEVER, *there is a shortage of jobs and subsidies for them to pay their rent!* Therefore, they are being denied housing because they can't prove they can pay their rental obligation, it's not due to the presence of criminal records!

The State needs to help pay the rent for this population, not endanger owners, other tenants and staff at risk by concealing criminal records. Owners need to know who they are dealing with and many owners like to rent to the re-entry population because they tend to stay in their units once they get an apartment, but these owners know they are dealing with individuals with criminal histories. We shouldn't hide facts when considering rental applicants, it can and will lead to grave consequences for many innocent individuals.

2.) **Legislators might think they are helping the re-entry population with this proposal but in fact this policy does just the opposite...** Consider "Ban the Box". Instead of increasing minority job opportunities like it was intended to do, it decreased opportunities and the same will happen here. If owners perceive risk, they will ratchet up requirements to get an apartment.

One property manager said recently. If these criminal erasure Bills become law, *"Anyone with tear-drop tattoos on their face or neck will never get a rent from me."* Owners will turn to Facebook, internet searches and other unreliable and unsubstantiated sources to investigate applicants if we limit look-back periods for legitimate screening services.



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3.) HUD already dictates that everyone needs to be treated as an individual and there is no ability to offer blanket denials based upon a criminal record. Let the Federal guideline stand and don't mess up what is already working.

Think about how well intended electric deregulation was for CT and look at the disaster the Legislature created there! Landlords don't look to deny applicants, they can't pay their mortgages and taxes without renters in their property.

4.) If evictions were not so long and dragged out, owners would take much more risk in renting to applicants. They would not be so opposed to the financial risk from a re-entry applicant if they only had a couple weeks of employment history. This is a fact that Legislators don't want to discuss in Connecticut. States with shorter eviction processes have less homelessness, less blight and more affordable rents.... maybe we should investigate this as an alternative solution!

5.) Sadly, I know a bit about second chance opportunities. Here's what I have experienced personally. I pray that these horrible things don't happen to any of the committee members, their family or friends. The victims mentioned next, I knew well. They can't speak today against this proposal, so I am speaking for them;

-) My former business partner, Isadore "Izzy" Ellin was murdered by his tenant that had 27 convictions covering 17 court appearances. He was bludgeoned to death at night in his Middlebury driveway and robbed of \$700 just before Thanksgiving. Izzy was trying to help this guy with odd jobs and gave him a vehicle. Izzy would not support this Bill
-) My friend's daughter Jessica was raped and contracted gonorrhea by a guy that was let out of prison who was staying at their home until he could get on his feet. She was only 7 years old when sexually assaulted, sadly she passed since. Jessica would not support this Bill.
-) Justin Savage who was in my wife's cub scout pack and my son's friend was killed over a pack of Newport cigarettes. Justin's mom begged for leniency at the sentencing of her son's murderer as they were friends and just teenagers but when he released from jail, he first committed a minor offense before being arrested again for strangulation. Justin would not support this Bill

I mentioned the victims' names above but not the assailants because they don't deserve recognition. What are we doing here? The Legislature needs to protect the public's health, safety and welfare, not put innocent citizens at a heightened risk of injury.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob De Cosmo