

March 9, 2021

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 Andi Fliegel and I am writing in support of Senate Bill No. 1019. I am a resident of West Hartford and a rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford, CT. My congregation is a proud member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA).

I am a white person who lives in suburban Connecticut and I support a strong Clean Slate bill that includes class C, D, and E felonies. We cannot accept a clean slate bill that is not inclusive of these felony convictions.

My tradition is one that teaches the value of second chances. We are grounded by the concept of *teshuva* – repentance and ultimately forgiveness. Mistakes do not dictate the outcome of a person’s life. They are part and parcel of what it means to be human. We have a specific series of instructions for an individual to fulfill *teshuva* – by acknowledging their wrong, by mending what is broken, and by refraining from committing the same offense again. It is not easy or simple to take part in *teshuva* but once it has been done, there are no lingering consequences to the original offender.

However in our current criminal justice system, the lingering consequences for people with criminal records completely disregards the supposed rehabilitation attained upon completion of time served. As I’m sure you know, [a criminal record](#) reduces a job seeker’s chance of getting a callback or job offer by nearly 50 percent. Not surprisingly then, [if not for mass incarceration](#) and the collateral consequences of a criminal record, the U.S. poverty rate could have dropped a full 20% between 1980 and 2004.

A strong clean slate bill is the answer. [A 2019 study](#) in Michigan found that those who have had their records expunged saw a 25% pay increase after just two years.

Thank you for your support.

Rabbi Andi Fliegel

127 Haynes Road West Hartford, CT 06117