

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,

My name is Rev. Larissa Forsythe and I serve as the Associate Minister of the Congregational Church in South Glastonbury, a founding member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA). I am writing in **support the Judiciary Committee 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.**

My faith asserts that every person has dignity and worth in the eyes of God and that God desires abundant life for all. Our current criminal justice system routinely denies that claim, most egregiously in the ways that folks who have paid their due to society and made every effort to turn their lives around are haunted by a criminal record at every turn. Nationally, 90% of employers, 80% of landlords, and 60% of colleges use background checks as a criteria for employment, housing, and higher education. This means that a person saddled with a criminal record - even decades old - can be denied gainful employment, a place to live, or the opportunity to receive an education. This despite the fact that people who remain crime-free three to four years after a non-violent conviction are no more likely to commit a crime than someone who has never been arrested. This despite the fact that 30% of American adults have some sort of criminal record. This despite the fact that nearly half of all American children have at least one parent with a criminal record.

They way we handle criminal records must change - for the sake of those who are ready and willing to move forward with their lives, for the children who depend upon them, and for our society as a whole. In order for this change to be meaningful, it has to be robust and inclusive with particular awareness of the ways that charging and sentencing are often more severe for people of color.

I support **Senate Bill 1019** as a solution to the unjust and dehumanizing bondage that a non-violent criminal record creates. I support the bill because: it includes all misdemeanors mid Class C, D, mid E felonies (excluding family violence and sex crimes), it applies retroactively, does not have a waiting period that exceeds that of the current petition-based system, and it includes anti-discrimination protections for people with records.

Thank you for your work on this important bill.

Sincerely yours,

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