

March 9, 2021

Joint Committee on Judiciary
Legislative Office Building, Room 2500
Hartford, CT 06106

To the Honorable Senator Winfield, the Honorable Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

I am writing in support of 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 Sentences.

As a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), a congregant of Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford, and a resident of Bloomfield, I feel strongly in seeing Connecticut pass a robust and inclusive clean slate bill which would allow people who have already been punished to support themselves, provide for their families, and contribute to their communities.

Clean slate would automatically expunge the criminal records of people who have returned to outside society and remained crime free for a period of time. I support S.B. 1019 because it would:

- Include all misdemeanors and Class C, D, and E felonies (convictions for 10 years or less), excluding convictions for sex crimes and family violence,
- Apply retroactively,
- Include antidiscrimination protections for people with records.

I have witnessed the negative impact an unexpunged criminal record has on seeking meaningful and well-paying employment. I am especially grateful that S.B. 1019 includes relief for people with felony convictions. Given that nearly 9 in 10 employers, 4 in 5 landlords, and 3 in 5 colleges now use background checks, you can imagine the fear that arises when someone with a criminal record applies for a new job, housing, or education. Even years after an individual has been punished.

In my family, a relative was incarcerated for a relatively brief period time after a non-violent felony judgment. Upon release, my family member went through 5 years of parole and probation. Today, more than a decade after completing their sentence, my family member is seeking a new job, to provide better economic security for their family and improved happiness in their work. The stress of not knowing if a criminal background check will generate a hit and eliminate all chances on improved employment is real and strong. As testimony is public record, I am choosing not to include my relative's name or actual relationship to me to protect my loved one from the ongoing discrimination and stigma this bill is meant to address. To me, this speaks volumes to why it is imperative that Connecticut adopts clean slate legislation.

Eligible, returning citizens should have the barriers to full reintegration into our communities be reduced as much as possible and as quickly as possible. Automatic expungement of their criminal records, as stated in S.B. 1019, will significantly improve people's lives.

A 2019 Michigan study found that citizens who had their records expunged saw a 25% increase in salary after just two years. Those salaries, earned on the legal marketplace, mean that these individuals can secure basic goods, support their families, and contribute tax dollars to society. If not for the consequences of a criminal record, the U.S. poverty rate could have dropped a full 20% between 1980 and 2004. In 2014, the employment penalty for felony conviction cost the U.S. economy 1.9 million workers. Those are costs that our society cannot afford.

As a woman of faith, I am empowered by my Jewish ethics rooted in our sacred texts to pursue justice and to work towards repairing the world. I join my fellow GHIAA members in urging the Committee to support S.B. 1019 as a way to make our state a more equitable place for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ilene J. Frank". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ilene J. Frank
50 Croydon Drive, Bloomfield, CT 06002