



TESTIMONY OF STEVE GINSBURG
ADL CONNECTICUT REGIONAL DIRECTOR
IN SUPPORT OF CONNECTICUT SB 1019

I would like to thank Co-Chairs Sen. Winfield & Rep. Stafstrom, Ranking Members Sen. Kissel & Rep. Fishbein, and esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee, for the opportunity to testify on behalf of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) **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*. This “clean slate” legislation is essential to addressing racial disparities, discrimination, and structural inequalities perpetuated by our criminal legal system.

As you may know, ADL is a leading anti-hate organization founded in 1913 to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. As such, ADL works vigorously to ensure that all people receive equal treatment under the law, regardless of their personal protected characteristics. We are committed to working to eliminate bias in the criminal justice system, to reduce mass incarceration, to remove collateral consequences that make it difficult for people to reenter society, and to reform practices that disproportionately impact communities of color.

A criminal record should not be a lifetime sentence. Yet in Connecticut today, it has the potential to mean just that. Under existing law, employers, landlords, colleges and universities, insurance companies, and many others continue to have access to criminal record information that can be used to discriminate against people with criminal histories for the rest of their lives. Connecticut also has over 500 laws and policies in place impeding people with criminal records from professional licenses and other opportunities to rebuild their lives and successfully re-enter and contribute to our communities.

Even more problematic, a disproportionate – and devastating – number of incarcerated people in Connecticut are people of color. Indeed, Black people are approximately 9.4 times more likely to be incarcerated relative to white people, and Latinx people are 3.9 times more likely to be incarcerated relative to white people. People of color should not face additional barriers to reentry simply because they have a criminal record that is itself the product of a system that disproportionately impacts people of color at every level.

In addition to being an urgent racial justice issue, clean slate legislation also makes good sense from an economic and public safety perspective. Not only are people with criminal histories less likely to reoffend if they are afforded the stability and support that derive from safe housing, gainful employment, and access to higher education, but they are also more likely to be employed and earn higher wages within the first year of their record having been cleared.

Five states have already passed clean slate laws, and momentum continues to build for this bipartisan legislation in states across the country. **We urge this Committee to give Senate Bill 1019 a favorable report.** Thank you.