

Testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly's Judiciary Committee

In support of Senate Bill No. 1019

3/10/2021

Co-Chairs Sen. Winfield & Rep. Stafstrom; Ranking Members Sen. Kissel & Rep. Fishbein; and esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee, I am writing **in support of S.B. 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 name is Mary Gorham and I am a resident of Woodbridge, CT. **I support S.B. 1019** for the automatic erasure of criminal records for certain crimes after appropriate time periods. Mass incarceration has had real, ongoing consequences in Connecticut, disproportionately hurting Black and brown communities in our state, and burdening hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents with a criminal record. Records present barriers to employment, housing, occupational licensing, and higher education. **9 in 10 employers, 4 in 5 landlords, and 3 in 4 colleges** use background checks. Clean Slate makes it possible for people who have done their time and proven themselves to be trustworthy to make a fresh start. This is hugely important.

It's also important that society at large feels safe. To that end, Clean Slate does not erase the records for the most violent crimes. It also puts in place appropriate time periods in which ex-offenders need to show they have not broken further laws before their records are erased. And the good news is that a study from the University of Michigan Law School found that recidivism rates for people who have had their records expunged are so low that they actually “pose a lower crime risk than the general population as a whole.”

In short, the way this bill is written, the needs of the individual and the needs of society are well balanced. It is a “Goldilocks” solution that maximizes both individual and societal good. I encourage all members of the Judiciary Committee, on both sides of the aisle, to support this important measure. Thank you.

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