

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 Rebekah Grafton. I am a white woman, a resident of West Hartford, and a member of Emanuel Lutheran Church in Hartford. I am writing in strong support of the Judiciary Committee's **Raised Senate Bill No. 1019**.

This bill is a necessary step in the direction of reducing the harm that mass incarceration has caused. Criminal records trap people in poverty by closing job and housing opportunities to them. For example, a 2009 study found that having a criminal record reduced a job applicant's chance of receiving a callback or job offer by 50%. Furthermore, the negative effects were even worse for Black applicants with criminal records than for white applicants with criminal records. If we look further back in the incarceration process, racially-biased policing already overly polices Black communities, and Black people tend to receive longer and harsher penalties than white people who have committed the same crimes. Mass incarceration and the negative effects of criminal records disproportionately affect Black Americans – thus this bill is necessary to contribute to the dismantling of the racial injustice built into our system.

If we want to create a just and peaceful society, then people who have served their sentences must be allowed to reenter society and given opportunities to secure financial stability and personal wellbeing without discrimination. Passing a real, robust, inclusive clean slate bill would allow people who have already been punished to support themselves, provide for their families, and contribute to their communities and is necessary to make our society safer, more prosperous, and more just.

Sincerely,
Rebekah Grafton
112 Washington Circle
West Hartford, CT 06119