

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 Paul Hammer and I am a resident of New Haven. **I support S.B. 1019** for the automatic erasure of criminal records for the offenses specified in the bill.

Most of us have asked or been given second chances in our lifetime. Now is our chance to do unto others as you would have others do unto you. If you do your time for the crime and have no involvement with the criminal justice system for the times specified for each offense in the bill, then it is time to have your criminal record expunged.

It is simply not anybody's business, for instance, to know what a 19 year old did after his or her release 5, 10, 15, 20 or more years after conviction, except for certain felonies that are exempt from the provisions of this bill (e.g. sex offenses).

If employers, landlords and colleges are allowed to discriminate against people because of their criminal records, we are only inviting recidivism on the part of people re-entering society from prison who cannot secure employment, housing and education. Many of the records to be expunged are nonviolent drug-related offenses, and drug use should never have been criminalized. It should have and still should be treated as a medical condition (addiction), not as a crime.

I believe the success of this legislation will be enhanced if all people re-entering society from prison are guaranteed adequate support in terms of housing and employment as well as education and training until such time as records are expunged (up to seven years following release).

With S.B. 1019, Connecticut can **strengthen our economy, improve public safety, and advance racial justice**. 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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