

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.**

I am Dr. Asti Jackson and I am the co-Chair of the Criminal Justice Reform team of Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut with Phil Kent. I am a resident of New Haven, Assistant Professor at Yale School of Medicine and **I support Senate Bill 1019** for the automatic erasure of criminal records.

Mass incarceration has had real, ongoing consequences. Not only on the people who are incarcerated but also their families. My father was incarcerated for over a decade in federal prison. I always thought he was the one being punished by doing time in prison, but I was being punished as well. I did time too..Time without him. In the 11 years he was in prison I matriculated from 5th grade to my senior year in college. He missed my elementary school graduation, my high school graduation and college graduation. I remember all of those times. Even when my father left prison, he still had to do time. He had to wait for permission from his parole officer to leave the state and wait on numerous occasions for employers to deny him a job because he had been labeled a felon. Even after finishing parole in 2018, he's still waiting for his time to end- for a time he can actually get a job that pays a livable wage and get real independence, a life similar to the one he had before prison.

I've shared my story many times. I even shared my story here in front of the Judiciary Committee 2 years ago in support of 2019's clean slate bill. It doesn't bring me any joy to have to tell my story again, in support of another Clean Slate bill because the State of Connecticut still hasn't passed a Clean Slate bill. It's frustrating because there are a lot of people who will be positively impacted by this bill. And they have been waiting a long time....especially those kids in the state of CT who have an absent father because of criminal justice involvement.. In fact, more than half of the CT state prison population are parents. These are parents who may face barriers to employment, housing and higher education upon release. And we know that the current petition expungement process in CT takes too much time. Justice delayed is justice denied. With S.B. 1019, Connecticut can strengthen its economy, improve public safety, and advance racial justice. The time to pass Clean Slate is now because we don't have time to wait any longer.

Dr. Asti Jackson, PhD

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