

Date 3/9/21

To Co-Chairs Sen. Winfield & Rep. Stafstrom; Ranking Members Sen. Kissel & Rep. Fishbein; and esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee,

RE: Testimony 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.

Honorable members of our Judiciary Committee,

I write today as a Clinical Social Worker, Professor of Social Work, and New Haven, CT, resident to support SB 1019. I am also Co-Chair of the New Haven Women's Resettlement Working Group, a community of support to ensure that the needs for women returning to our city following incarceration are taken into account within our city. Several aspects of this bill make for more supportive communities for CT residents, and especially those residents in recovery from their own past criminal record history.

This bill promotes a thoughtful process of pardons and paroles to help us all to understand the rationale for denial of pardons, an act that would create a more transparent process for any CR resident going through the pardons process. Additionally, a waiver of fees for pardon application would ensure a more equitable and accessible process for those with limited resources within our state. It is not acceptable that only those with resources could access the opportunity for pardon.

In addition to further support for reentry services, this bill also would do the valuable work of prohibiting discrimination for those with a past criminal conviction. This legislation, supported through the CT Sentencing Commission, would allow for better outcomes for all Connecticut residents returning from prisons and jails. It makes little sense to set reentering residents to our communities up for failure as they are denied housing and jobs because of their records. This proposed legislation helps create safer communities for us all as returning residents are able to obtain stability and a better life for themselves and their families, enabling them to have what they need and decreasing the likelihood of turning to illegal means of supporting self and others and thus returning to prison. We all benefit when more members of our communities live in quality housing and are employed, and of course when our the numbers of incarcerated residents of our state go down. The resources we previously used to incarcerate our community members can now be moved to better use in our state.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, and please feel free to reach out with any follow up questions.

Sincerely,
Amber Kelly, PhD, MSW, LCSW
School of Health Sciences, Quinnipiac University

24 Central Ave, New Haven, CT 06515