

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 Maureen Lopes and I am a resident of Madison, CT. **I support S.B. 1019** for the automatic erasure of criminal records. Mass incarceration continues to have real consequences in Connecticut, disproportionately hurting Black and brown communities in our state, and burdening hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents with a criminal record. I believe that individuals who have done their time and remained crime-free should be welcomed back into our communities.

Instead, criminal records that last for years and even decades beyond incarceration 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. Legislation is needed to address these problems. A criminal record should not be a lifetime sentence.

Clean Slate makes communities safer. When people have access to jobs, housing, occupational licensing, and higher education, they are more likely to earn higher wages, and less likely to recidivate. 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.”

I encourage all members of the Judiciary Committee, on both sides of the aisle, to support S.B. 1019. Your affirmative vote will help strengthen CT's economy, improve public safety, give hope to families and advance racial justice. Thank you.

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