

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 Bonnie Muller, a resident of Hamden. **I support S.B. 1019** for the automatic erasure of criminal records.

There is much excitement around the possibility of passage of this Bill. Clearly the barriers to employment, housing!, education, self-sufficiency and family reunification have been awful.

Because incarceration disproportionately has affected people of color, so has this set of barriers. I am part of a white family that has also been tragically affected by these barriers. A harsh sentence, a lack of mental health understanding or treatment while imprisoned, and the repeated societal rejections of this young man have pressed on low self-esteem so hard that the depression is ruthless, frustration and hopelessness are dangerous. We have tried to support him but he cannot see past the shame that has been etched into his identity.

Prison time should have been enough. A new start is due for all who have "paid their dues." This will not be a perfect solution for every formerly-incarcerated individual, but it will take off the chains that inhibit recovery of a full life and self-respect.

I hope that all members of the Judiciary Committee will see the benefits of S.B.1019 and likewise all members of the legislature.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

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