

**Testimony Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Committee on Judiciary  
In support of Raised Senate Bill 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**

To the Honorable Senator Winfield, the Honorable Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Nancy Pappas, and I am writing to express my strong support of Raised Senate Bill 1019, to automatically expunge many criminal records after a fixed period of years. As a member of the Unitarian Universalist congregation in Manchester, my faith calls me to both speak out and to live out the values that our denomination shares with so many others in this nation. I am thinking today of our first and second Unitarian Universalist principles: (1) The inherent worth and dignity of every person; and (2) Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

I fall within a demographic that some will claim is fearful of formerly incarcerated individuals: I am a 70-year-old white woman living in the suburbs. Please do not be swayed by arguments which project and ascribe fear to your constituents. I speak for many of my friends when I say, I support 1019 with enthusiasm. I will be proud to live in a state that provides a path forward to those who are trying to achieve stability after completing their sentences and remaining “crime-free” for substantial lengths of time.

Whether they were convicted of misdemeanors or lower-level felonies, these individuals deserve a second chance to make positive contributions to their communities. Yet employers, landlords and even colleges are likely to find records of arrests or convictions when they conduct background checks – and hold these past misdeeds against an individual, even decades after the fines are paid, or the sentences are completed.

Here’s an astonishing statistic: Nearly half of all children in the U.S. have a parent with a criminal record. That means more than 35 million kids live in families who could legally be turned away by a landlord, even if they have the funds to cover the rent. More than 35 million children could go hungry or lack basic necessities because their parents are unable to find jobs. When legal income is curtailed or even eliminated because of a past criminal record, how does a parent support the household? Is this the society we want to perpetuate?

I think the answer to that is “no.” A lifelong sentence of barriers and denials creates a perpetual underclass of people who cannot contribute to the economy, cannot effectively participate in community life, cannot reach their own potential – or even envision what that potential might look like.

I urge the legislature to pass SB 1019, and allow our citizens to move on from the bad choices they may have made in the past. Thank you.

**Nancy Pappas**

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