

March 7, 2021

26 Douglas Drive
Enfield, CT 06082

Testimony regarding Senate Bill #1019 (Clean Slate)

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking members Senator Kissel and Senator Fishbein, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Ann Percival. I am a constituent of Senator Kissel's. I am asking you to vote in favor of Senate Bill #1019, commonly referred to as the Clean Slate bill.

I'm in support of the Clean Slate bill for several reasons.

- I believe that all residents of Connecticut are safer when those people who have served their time in the criminal justice system are able to be fully reintegrated into our communities. This allows the formerly incarcerated citizens to obtain a decent job, care for their families, live in a secure residence, and maintain hope that brighter days are ahead for them despite what may have been behind them.
- The phrase “paid their debt to society” puts me in a position where these people somehow owe me a debt for committing the crime for which they were punished. If that's the case, then I want to tell them that the debt they owe me is cancelled when they have completed the terms of their conviction. I am not asking them to be branded for the rest of their lives as marginally employable, unfit for public housing, unable to attain a professional license, or to be subject to the hundreds of negative collateral consequences that follow a formerly incarcerated person for possibly a lifetime.
- I believe that the children of formerly incarcerated adults deserve to have their parents return to them as full citizens able to get their lives back on track without the stigma of collateral consequences that create roadblocks to their goal of reknitting the bonds of family.
- In a strictly dollars and cents analysis, surely it makes sense for as many people as possible in Connecticut to be contributing to our state's economy by working for a decent wage at a job that will support a family. When we place obstacles in front of formerly incarcerated individuals in their attempts to secure a job, we're defeating this goal and harming all of the citizens of Connecticut by creating a class of people who will require economic safety nets.
- Multiple studies and anecdotal references demonstrate that formerly incarcerated people make excellent employees. It's simply smart business to hire someone who is eager for a second chance and wants to feel the rewarding sense of purpose that comes from embracing personal responsibility. Formerly incarcerated people are motivated to work hard and reliably. Eliminating collateral consequences that thwart the hiring of these citizens helps all of us.

I am asking you to pass a version of Clean Slate that will automatically erase someone's

criminal record upon release from prison, not merely seal it. There is no reason to create a costly process—in time and dollars—for these people to complete upon release when the erasure can be done with the stroke of a key. How does it help me to make it more difficult for them to get on with their lives? It doesn't.

Unfortunately, the Internet isn't very good at erasure. For this reason, it's imperative that the bill include a means through which formerly incarcerated people can seek redress if they've been discriminated against in employment or housing due to a previous criminal conviction unrelated to the employment or housing in question.

In conclusion, I ask for you to make Connecticut a safer and fairer place to live for me and for all of us by supporting Senate Bill #1019 (Clean Slate).

With respect,