

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 Molly Shapiro and I am a resident of New Haven. I support S.B. 1019 for the automatic erasure of criminal records. Mass incarceration has had real, ongoing consequences in Connecticut, disproportionately hurting Black and brown communities in our state, and burdening hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents with a criminal record. Records 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. Clean Slate will automatically expunge the records of people who have served their time, returned to our communities, and remained crime-free. A criminal record should not be a lifetime sentence.

As a policy fellow at the New Haven Department of Reentry, I have assisted many men and women with the pardon application process and seen firsthand just how complex, frustrating, costly, and cumbersome it can be. My clients have had to call the Board of Pardons and Paroles every day, multiple times a day, to try to understand the inaccessible application portal. They have had to spend \$75 that they do not have to cover the cost of the background checks -- sometimes paying the amount twice because no one told them that the report expires after a year. They have had to beg for the chance at a second chance, even though they have served their sentences in full. This must end.

With S.B. 1019, Connecticut can strengthen our economy, improve public safety, and advance racial justice. I encourage all members of the Judiciary Committee, on both sides of the aisle, to support this important measure. Thank you.

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