

Testimony of The Connecticut Coalition Of Property Owners (CCOPO)

In front of the Judicial Committee March 10th, 2021

Re: SD 1019 Opposed

Good morning esteemed members of the judicial committee. My name is John Souza and I volunteer as President of the CT Coalition of Property Owners and I'm a full-time landlord. The Connecticut Coalition Of Property Owners (CCOPO) is one of Connecticut's largest landlord/property owner organizations. CCOPO has chapters in Enfield, Windham, Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Norwich and Stamford, as well as the CT Association of Real Estate Investors (CAREI) in West Hartford. Our members own thousands of rental units throughout Connecticut, consisting of mostly small and mid-sized landlords.

For over 20 years, CCOPO has been a constructive voice for responsible landlords on such issues as: nuisance abatement, bedbugs and domestic violence. We are here to represent the mom-and-pop small businesspeople that provide a valuable and much needed service. Most of us are residents of the towns we serve and just ask to be treated fairly in any proposed legislation.

OPPOSE SB 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.

CCOPO understands the need to support the formerly incarcerated. Any proposed policies should not punish landlords who take reasonable steps and act in good faith to protect other innocent tenants, their families, and communities. The Lookback period should be 10 years for a covered felony and 5 years for misdemeanors, starting from the date of release from confinement. Since we cannot see into the hearts of formerly incarcerated persons, **evidence of good behavior after release** is the only criteria, we as property owners can assess and is critical to protecting many innocent young and or disabled existing tenants. Without the ability to see patterns of behavior the public safety will be at risk. Just because someone is poor doesn't mean they don't deserve to live in a safe building. The state has the ability to expunge the records of deserving justice involved persons already and the process includes a commission or board that examines the behavior of the offender post release, to ensure they have changed their ways. This is the most important part to protect public safety.

Secondly, granting protected class status to the formerly incarcerated for discrimination purposes is a bad idea. Protected class status was intended to protect persons from discrimination because of innate characteristics that they were born with, like race, color

sex, gender etc. I don't believe that extending the protection to a chosen behavior, such as becoming justice involved, should be included. Never mind it allows white men with a prison record to receive "protected class" status. I don't think that is what they had in mind when protected classes were created. If the State does its job correctly, records are erased completely and we will not be able to see anything that we could discriminate against. So why subject landlords and employers to extremely expensive and punitive lawsuits.

Thank you for your time.

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