

March 7, 2021

The Rev. Linda Spiers
3 Whirling Dun
Canton, CT 06019

RE: Support of Senate Bill No. 1019

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

I am an Episcopal Priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. I am currently retired and serving as a supply priest where needed. I write to you in support of Raised Senate Bill No. 2019: 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 white and have lived in Canton for 17+ years, and I believe that a strong Clean Slate bill is a just and needed action. I am not afraid of this bill and believe it is long overdue. Our sisters and brothers of color are discriminated against every day of their lives, and we can see this in the way they have been disproportionately served and impacted by COVID-19.

People who have made a mistake, served their sentence, and turned their lives around deserve to have another chance. As Christians we are called to love God and love neighbor, no matter who our neighbor is. That is shared across many traditions. It's time for us to live powerfully into that love of neighbor. After a proven time of healing, forgiveness is possible and essential. The right for people to continue their lives by getting into a college or getting a job to feed their families or to not be marked for life because of an earlier conviction—these are rights we must make possible to all. I support this bill because it would include all misdemeanors and Class C, D, and E felonies (convictions for 10 years or less), **excluding convictions for sex crimes and family violence**. It also applies retroactively and includes antidiscrimination protections for people with records. We must make it possible for people defined in this bill to have a way out of no way—a way to meet their basic human needs.

Thank you for your attention and your consideration and your support of this bill.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Linda Spiers