

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF ANNE STANBACK  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTION TEAM  
GREATER HARTFORD INTERFAITH ACTION ALLIANCE (GHIAA)  
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*

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

My name is Anne Stanback. I live in the town of Avon and am the Chair of the Board of Directors of Community Partners in Action, one of the oldest organizations of its kind in the country committed to criminal justice reform and advocating for preserving human dignity of those in and out of prison.

I am also a member of Immanuel Congregational Church/UCC in Hartford. Immanuel Church is one of the founding members of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), and I am a member of GHIAA's Criminal Justice Action Team. GHIAA was launched in the fall of 2019 and is comprised of nearly 40 dues-paying institutions (including Jewish, Christian and Muslim congregations and Catholic and neighborhood organizations). I submit this testimony in support of S.B. 1019 on behalf of GHIAA and its members.

Many individuals and organizations will testify in support of S.B. 1019 from a variety of perspectives. I testify as a person of faith, a person who believes that every human being has worth, that people who have been punished for a crime should not continue to be punished over and over, after their debt has been paid.

S.B. 1019 would go a long way towards allowing people who have been punished to support themselves, provide for their families, and contribute to their communities. Clean Slate would automatically expunge the criminal records of people who have returned to society and remained crime free. I support S.B. 1019 because it would:

- Include all misdemeanors and Class C, D, and E felonies (except sex crimes and family violence)
- Not have an excessive waiting period for relief
- Apply retroactively
- Includes strong antidiscrimination protections for people with records

Currently, eligible returning citizens must go through a lengthy, confusing, and opaque application process through the Board of Pardons and Parole. Most people require legal assistance, which can be expensive during the lengthy application process. These factors dramatically suppress participation. This Clean Slate bill would eliminate these barriers to integration for many. Given that nearly 9 in 10 employers, 4 in 5 landlords, and 3 in 5 colleges now use background checks, these barriers are very real and result in denying people who were formerly incarcerated the opportunity to support themselves and their families.

Connecticut would not be the first state to enact Clean Slate legislation. Pennsylvania, Utah, California, and Michigan have all passed similar legislation with strong bi-partisan support. Michigan's bill also includes felony convictions. And the data show why more states should follow their lead. A 2019 Michigan study found that citizens who had their records expunged saw a 25% increase in salary after just two years. Those salaries, earned on the legal marketplace, mean that these individuals can secure basic goods, support their families, and contribute tax dollars to society. A study of the U.S. military found that those with felony records were promoted more rapidly and to higher ranks than others and were no more likely to be discharged for negative reasons than individuals without records.

If not for the consequences of a criminal record, the U.S. poverty rate could have dropped a full 20% between 1980 and 2004. In 2014, the employment penalty for felony conviction cost the U.S. economy 1.9 million workers. Those are costs that our society cannot afford.

As a person of faith, I am concerned by the fact that mass incarceration and the consequences of having a criminal record disproportionately impact communities of color and poor people. According to The Sentencing Project, Blacks are over nine times more likely—and Hispanics are over four times more likely—to be incarcerated than Whites in Connecticut, a disparity even greater than the national averages. In addition, nearly half the people in Connecticut's shelters have been incarcerated: over 17,000 people entered Connecticut's shelters between 2016 and 2019; more than 8,000 have been incarcerated.

If those statistics were not alarming enough, nearly half of American children now have at least one parent with a criminal record.

People of faith must work to transform this system because it makes our most benign aims impossible. It sabotages any ambition to harness national resources toward the common good. It punishes poor people with more poverty, splintering already fractured communities. It rests on the belief that anyone caught in its web is irredeemable and broken beyond repair.

For all of these reasons, GHIAA urges the Committee to support S.B. 1019 as a way to make our state a safer and fairer place for all.