

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

I am writing in support of the *Clean Slate Bill : 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.*

I am an Episcopal priest, serving as Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Vernon. I lead a congregation who worship a God of grace, a God who relentlessly, patiently, boldly, and lovingly shows mercy to all of God's people, even the lost, the lonely, and the least. I worship a God who forgives and commands His people to do likewise. How many times should I forgive another person asks Peter? 70X7 says Jesus. I worship a God who repeatedly offers vulnerable people living on the margins of the society a clean slate, a fresh start, a second, tenth, or hundredth chance, a new beginning. Forgiveness and a clean slate in **life** is the central healing act and holy sign accomplished over and over again by Jesus as he models the way of love, the beloved community, the great commandment, and the character of a faithfulness that bears fruit. We who been forgiven an infinite number of times by our loving God must extend that same forgiveness to our neighbors. The reconciliation with and restoration to the community that would be achieved by this legislation will lift up individuals and families, help to address stubborn poverty and homelessness, and move us towards greater racial equity and justice in the criminal justice system. This is why I support a strong Clean Slate Bill.

Sincerely yours,

The Rev. Virginia W.G. Army

March 7, 2021

Vernon, CT