

# Clean Slate Testimony Guide 2021

## The Issue:

The consequences of having a criminal record, especially a felony conviction, impacts the entire nation because of the way it drains the economy, and how it disproportionately targets communities of color. According to the FBI, 30% of American adults have some sort of criminal record. These records haunt people for the rest of their lives, locking people out of opportunities to meet their basic human needs. Nationally, most employers ([90%](#)), landlords ([80%](#)), and colleges ([60%](#)) use background checks in the recruiting process.

Nationally, [one in three Black men](#) have a felony conviction, compared to just 8% of the total population. Here in Connecticut, 25% - 31% of Black men have a felony conviction. This is driven, in part, by the fact that Black and Latinx people continue to receive harsher and longer sentences for the same crimes as white people.

We support the clean slate bill raised in the Judiciary Committee (**S.B. 1019**). Passing a real, robust, inclusive clean slate bill would allow people who have already 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 outside society and remained crime free for a period of time. We **support Raised Senate Bill No. 1019** 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
- Apply retroactively
- Include antidiscrimination protections for people with records

## Potential Talking Points:

### **Sapping National Resources**

[If not for mass incarceration](#) and the collateral 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 convictions cost the U.S. economy 1.9 million workers

### **Poor People Are Targeted & Kept Poor**

[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.

[A criminal record](#) reduces a job seeker's chance of getting a callback or job offer by nearly 50 percent.

Nearly [half](#) of American children now have at least one parent with a criminal record.

### **Expungement Works & Creates Opportunity**

[A 2019 study](#) in Michigan found that those who have had their records expunged saw a 25% pay increase after just two years.

[A study of the U.S. military](#) found that individuals 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.

[A benefit-cost study](#) of a limited number of record expungement recipients in Santa Clara County, California, estimated the net benefits of expungement at \$5,760 per recipient per year.

### **Sample Outline for Written Testimony:**

Written Testimony Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Committee on Judiciary **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**

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

- Introduce yourself and your congregation; indicate clearly you are writing in support of the Judiciary Committee bill
- **Important:** If you are white or live in the suburbs, it is vital that you name that. Name it and say that despite that, you are not afraid of a strong Clean Slate bill.
- Some theological reflection as to why, speaking as a religious leader/ congregant in the community
- A relevant story if possible (these will be posted publicly).
- Data points that bolster your claims

### **Delivering Testimony:**

Submit public hearing testimony on clean slate to the judiciary committee:

[judgetestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:judgetestimony@cga.ct.gov). Follow these general guidelines from the Connecticut General Assembly on submitting public hearing testimony, as well as some of the mechanics if you choose to give oral testimony [here](#). Your oral and written testimonies **do not** have to be the same. Save the data-heavy portions of your testimony for the written version. You only have three minutes to deliver oral testimony; therefore, it should be organized around a potent story or a statement of values. Statistics can complement stories in this context, but should not replace them.