

LD 1911 Testimony

Testimony in Support of LD 1911 – Clean Slate Maine

Submitted by: Sarah Hipkens, MD – Addiction Medicine Physician

Good morning, Senator Talbot Ross, distinguished committee members, and fellow Mainers:

My name is Sarah Hipkens, and I am an addiction medicine physician practicing in Portland. Every day, I have the privilege of working with patients who are committed to recovery, who show up to appointments, rebuild their relationships, and work tirelessly to contribute to their families and communities. Despite their hard work and dedication, many of these individuals face systemic barriers that continue to hold them back—chief among them, criminal records that limit access to jobs, housing, and education.

I have seen firsthand how these barriers can derail recovery. Patients who are motivated, stable, and sober can still struggle to find employment or safe housing solely because of past convictions. The stress and instability caused by these obstacles increase the risk of relapse, exacerbate mental health challenges, and place families in jeopardy. In short, the system often punishes people long after they have served their time and demonstrated meaningful change.

LD 1911, the Clean Slate Maine Act, offers a practical and fair solution. By creating an **automatic process to seal eligible criminal records**, the bill removes unnecessary administrative hurdles, ensures equitable access to relief, and gives Mainers who have remained crime-free for 5–15 years a real chance to move forward. This approach not only promotes dignity and fairness, but it also supports recovery by stabilizing housing and employment—two critical social determinants of health.

Evidence from other states shows that record sealing **increases employment opportunities and wages, reduces recidivism, and strengthens families and communities**. Importantly, people with sealed records are **no more likely to reoffend than those without records**, demonstrating that this policy aligns public safety with second chances.

As someone on the frontlines of addiction treatment, I strongly support LD 1911. Automatic record sealing is not just a legal reform—it is a public health intervention. It supports recovery, reduces harm, and strengthens our communities. I urge the committee

to **vote yes on LD 1911**, so that Mainers who have worked hard to rebuild their lives are no longer held back by the mistakes of their past.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Hipkens, MD

Addiction Medicine Physician