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January 6, 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1911, An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Thomas O'Boyle, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce. We proudly represent approximately 1,400 businesses across the Greater Portland region, collectively employing more than 75,000 Mainers. I write in strong support of LD 1911, An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes — a practical, evidence-based policy that would expand Maine's labor force, strengthen our economy, and modernize an existing legal process to better serve workers, employers, and the state.

Roughly one in three adults in the United States has some form of criminal record. For many individuals, even a lower-level, nonviolent offense can create long-lasting barriers to employment. Data shows that having a criminal record reduces a job seeker's chance of receiving a callback or employment offer by nearly 50 percent, regardless of qualifications, experience, or the nature of the offense¹.

The economic cost of this exclusion is substantial. Nationally, shutting people with records out of the workforce is estimated to reduce gross domestic product by \$78 to \$87 billion every year². For a state like Maine, which is already facing persistent workforce shortages, this represents lost productivity, constrained business growth, and reduced tax revenue.

Importantly, Maine already recognizes that certain records should not operate as lifelong barriers. Current law allows eligible individuals to petition the court to have qualifying records sealed. However, the existing process is costly, complex, and time-consuming, often requiring legal assistance and multiple court filings. As a result, many people who are legally eligible for relief never obtain it. This is inefficient for individuals and places unnecessary strain on a court system that is already facing significant workload pressures.

LD 1911 does not create a new or radical policy. It automates an existing sealing mechanism for those with eligible offenses. By shifting from a petition-based system to an automatic one, the bill removes unnecessary complexity and cost while preserving appropriate public safety safeguards. This modernization improves access to relief while reducing administrative burdens on Maine's legal system.

Evidence from other states with Clean Slate policies shows that when records are sealed, people experience meaningful economic gains. Individuals whose records are set aside see wage increases of more than 22 percent within one year³, reflecting improved access to stable employment. These gains translate into increased consumer spending, higher tax contributions, and reduced reliance on public assistance — benefits that accrue to businesses, communities, and the state.

¹ https://prisonstudiesproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/pager-western_sequencing-disadvantage_2009.pdf

² <https://nicic.gov/weblink/price-we-pay-economic-costs-barriers-employment-former-prisoners-and-people-convicted>

³ <https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3167&context=facarticles>



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For Maine employers, this legislation is especially timely. With only 68 available workers for every 100 open jobs⁴, businesses across nearly every sector are struggling to find and retain talent. Clean Slate would help bridge this gap by reconnecting employers with a large, underutilized pool of workers who already live in our communities and are eager to contribute.

Clean Slate also supports public safety and long-term economic stability. Stable employment is one of the strongest predictors of reduced reoffending. By helping individuals secure work, this legislation strengthens families, reduces cycles of poverty, and supports safer, more resilient communities.

Maine needs workforce solutions that are data-driven, fiscally responsible, and responsive to the realities facing employers and workers alike. Clean Slate meets those goals. **On behalf of the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce, I respectfully urge the Committee to pass LD 1911.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas O'Boyle".

Thomas O'Boyle
Director of Advocacy

⁴ <https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/the-states-suffering-most-from-the-labor-shortage?state=me>