

Testimony in Support of LD 1911 - *An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes.*

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Linda Small. I am the Executive Director of Reentry Sisters, and I am here today in strong support of LD 1911, *An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes.*

I want to begin with a brief personal story that illustrates exactly why this bill matters.

Three years ago, I applied for a professional position at the University of Southern Maine. I was selected from a competitive pool of candidates and formally offered the job. As part of the hiring process, I was asked to complete a background check. I disclosed my conviction, including the date, the charge, and my name at the time. I also went a step further and emailed Human Resources to flag the disclosure and ask who I should speak with if clarification was needed.

Two days later, I was notified that I had cleared the background check and was instructed to sign my employment contract. I did. My first week was extraordinary. For the first time in years, I had health insurance, job stability, and access to tuition support to pursue my PhD.

One week later, I was fired by Human Resources for "withholding information" about my background—despite having disclosed it fully, proactively, and in writing.

The message was unmistakable: my qualifications were acceptable, but my past, now more than 17 years behind me, was not.

This experience is not unique. Approximately 72% of colleges and universities use criminal background checks in hiring decisions, including for current students. In Maine, where roughly one in four people has a criminal record, this kind of discretionary screening becomes a permanent barrier, long after a sentence has been completed.

Automatic sealing matters because it removes arbitrary and inconsistent decision-making from systems that are not equipped to assess rehabilitation, context, or time passed. LD 1911 recognizes that people should not be forced to repeatedly relitigate their worst moment in order to work, pursue education, or support their families.

This bill does not eliminate accountability, and it does not apply to all offenses. What it does is acknowledge that perpetual punishment through public records undermines economic stability, workforce participation, and educational opportunity for individuals, families, and Maine communities.

LD 1911 is a smart and fair policy. I urge this committee to vote *ought to pass* and help ensure that completing a sentence truly means having a second chance.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify.

Linda Small
Portland, Maine
linda.small230@gmail.com