

To: Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
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 Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Nikkie Laverdiere, and I'm proud to be a lifelong Mainer and a mother in recovery from Substance Use Disorder. I am also very proud to work at The HILLS Recovery Center in Norway, Maine. Every day, I sit with Mainers who are doing the challenging and rewarding work of healing and changing their lives. They show up for recovery meetings, rebuild relationships, apply for jobs, and try to find stable housing. They are trying to do what we all want people to do after they have made mistakes: take responsibility, grow, and contribute.

And then, again and again, I watch a past record become the wall they cannot get around.

For people in recovery, stability is the difference between staying on track and falling back into survival mode. It is having a safe place to live. It is being able to work. It is being able to go to school or training. It is being able to show up for your kids. It is the ability to move forward without being punished forever for something you did years ago, sometimes decades ago, when you don't even feel like that person anymore.

The people we serve are not asking to erase the past. They are asking for a fair chance to build a future.

Right now, even when someone is eligible for record sealing, the process can be confusing, time-consuming, expensive, and intimidating. Many people do not even know where to start. Others give up because it feels like one more hurdle they cannot clear. In recovery, we talk a lot about removing barriers because barriers can become triggers. When someone finally has momentum and hope, and then they are turned away from housing or employment because of something that occurred years ago, that hope can collapse fast. I have seen how quickly that discouragement turns into isolation, shame, and giving up.

LD 1911 matters because it creates an automated process for sealing certain eligible records after a person has remained conviction-free for a set period of time. In plain terms, it makes record sealing something that happens for people who qualify, instead of something they have to navigate alone. That change is huge. It means relief is not limited to those who have money, legal help, transportation, internet access, time off work, or the confidence to walk into a courtroom and argue their worth.

This bill is about public safety and community health. People do better when they have steady housing, steady work, and a real reason to believe their future can be different. Removing

unnecessary barriers helps people stay stable. It helps Maine's workforce. It helps families. It helps entire communities.

One of my favorite things about working in the recovery community is that it reflects the true diversity of our state. This includes diversity in thought, beliefs, and politics. Addiction and recovery impact every type of person. So I see supporting redemption for past mistakes and poor choices as a truly bipartisan issue.

This bill is a practical, bipartisan solution that states across the country have already pursued. Similar clean Slate laws have passed in more conservative states like Utah, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kentucky, as well as more liberal states like Massachusetts and New York. Maine would not be reinventing the wheel here. We can learn from what other states have already done and choose a path that reflects Maine values like fairness and rewarding hard work.

From my perspective, the question is this: Do we want people to get stuck forever in their worst moments, or do we want them to become stable, employed, connected community members who can contribute?

At The HILLS, we know recovery is possible. We see it every day. LD 1911 recognizes that people can change, and that our systems can evolve to better support that. This bill would give thousands of Mainers a better shot at stability, productivity, and hope. It would help people in recovery keep moving forward instead of being pulled back by their past.

I respectfully urge you to support LD 1911.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration,

Nikkie Laverdiere

Norway, Maine