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Testimony in Support of LD 1911

An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes

January 8, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Niki Merrill, and I am a person in long-term recovery and MDOC Recovery Program Coordinator at Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC). I'm speaking on behalf of Nicole Proctor, PRCC's Executive Director, in strong support of LD 1911, *An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes*.

PRCC is a peer-led recovery organization serving Greater Portland and supporting communities statewide through the Maine Recovery Hub. Every day, we work with individuals who have rebuilt their lives: people in recovery, supporting their families, and contributing to society. Yet, old criminal records continue to create barriers to employment, housing, and stability, even years after sentences are complete.

In Maine, one in four adults lives with a criminal record, often from low-level, nonviolent offenses. These records undermine recovery by limiting access to safe housing and work opportunities, making it harder for people to fully participate in their communities. When stability is out of reach, recovery becomes harder to sustain, and the ripple effects impact families, employers, and communities.

In 2022, the Legislature created a petition-based process to seal certain misdemeanor records. While well-intentioned, it has proven largely inaccessible, requiring time, legal knowledge, and resources many Mainers don't have. As a result, very few eligible people obtain relief.

With LD 1911, we have the opportunity to modernize Maine's approach by creating an automated record-sealing process, aligning us with other states that have adopted Clean Slate policies. Automation ensures relief is applied consistently and equitably, regardless of income or access to legal counsel. This bill maintains public safety while removing outdated barriers that prevent people from moving forward.

From a recovery perspective, LD 1911 is critical. Long-term recovery is supported by access to stable housing and meaningful opportunities, including employment, which strengthen personal agency, dignity, and self-determination.

On behalf of PRCC, I respectfully urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1911. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Proctor, Executive Director
Portland Recovery Community Center
Read by Niki Merrill on my behalf