

Testimony in support of LD 1911 to the Committee On Judiciary

January 8, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee On Judiciary,

My name is Sarah Johnson and I reside in Sanford. I am writing in support of LD 1911, An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes.

Enacting LD 1911 would improve fairness and opportunity for formerly incarcerated people while maintaining public safety in Maine.

According to the [Clean Slate Initiative](#), one in four adults in Maine has a criminal record. Many of these records are for low-level, nonviolent offenses, yet access to them creates lifelong barriers to employment, housing, and education. Research shows that a prior conviction cuts a person's chances of getting an interview or job offer by almost 50% and 90% of landlords use background checks when screening tenants. This is supported by the findings of [Maine's Criminal Records Review Committee](#) in their 2024 report:

*"Unless prohibited by law, landlords, employers, insurance companies, institutions of higher education, financial institutions and other members of the community can also make decisions that negatively impact individuals with criminal records. Statistics cited in public comments submitted to the Committee reveal that nine out of 10 employers and four out of five landlords inquire about an applicant's criminal record."*¹

These barriers harm individuals, families and communities. Housing instability impacts physical and mental health, increases the needs for community services and so becomes a public health issue as well.

LD 1911 creates an automated record-sealing system that ensures everyone who has earned the right to have their records sealed will. This is a vast improvement over the past petitioning system, where according to ACLU of Maine's policy director, Michael Kebede, "*Most people who have eligible convictions are not aware that they could petition to get those records sealed*"².

According to the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition and the National Clean Slate Coalition. LD 1911 could provide 163,000 people automatic relief without requiring court petitions, money and time dedicated to a process they may not even know they are eligible for. Records would still remain available to courts and law enforcement, fully preserving public safety while removing unnecessary barriers from public background checks.

LD 1911 also balances accountability with redemption, public safety and victim's rights. Only individuals who have remained without a new conviction for 5 years or more, depending on the offense, are eligible. Serious offenses are excluded.

¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/11277#page=25>

² <https://themainemonitor.org/automatic-criminal-record-sealing-bill/>

Clean Slate policies work. [Research shows](#) that people with sealed records are no more likely to reoffend than those without records, and that average wages increase by about 23 percent within a year of record sealing. Stable jobs and housing reduce recidivism and strengthen public safety for everyone.

As noted in the [Cato Report](#): “**Petition-based expungement policies result in very low uptake rates**—that is, very few of those who are legally eligible actually apply for and receive an expungement. **People who receive expungements have very low rates of recidivism**—even lower by some measures than the average crime rates for all Michigan adults. **Expungement recipients quickly exhibit much better employment outcomes**”³

Automated record sealing also promotes equity. A [Prison Policy Initiative report](#) shows there is a significant racial disparity in Maine’s incarceration rates. Public access to criminal records disproportionately harms low-income communities as noted in research from the [National Employment Law Project](#): “Black households disproportionately lose wage earners first to incarceration and then to a labor market that excludes people with records”⁴. Automation ensures that relief is applied fairly and consistently.

Finally, Clean Slate is a bipartisan solution. Diverse states including Pennsylvania, Utah, Oklahoma, Michigan, New Jersey, and Virginia have enacted similar laws because they reflect shared values: accountability, dignity, economic opportunity, and community safety.

People who have served their sentences and demonstrated redemption and rehabilitation have earned the chance to move forward without being permanently defined by their past. LD 1911 ensures that Maine’s record-sealing system actually works as intended, for the benefit of all of us.

I respectfully ask you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1911.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson

<https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/data>

<https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/11277#page=1>

<https://themainemonitor.org/automatic-criminal-record-sealing-bill/>

<https://www.cato.org/regulation/summer-2020/power-clean-slate#>

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/ME.html>

<https://www.nelp.org/app/uploads/2024/04/Research-Supports-Fair-Chance-Policies-Apr.2024.pdf>

³ <https://www.cato.org/regulation/summer-2020/power-clean-slate#>

⁴ <https://www.nelp.org/app/uploads/2024/04/Research-Supports-Fair-Chance-Policies-Apr.2024.pdf>