



To: Senator Anne Carney, Senate Chair of the Judiciary Committee
Representative Amy Kuhn, House Chair of the Judiciary Committee
Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Date: January 8th, 2026

RE: 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 Kage Johnson, and I am a resident of Winslow, Maine. I am here today testifying in favor of LD 1911 on behalf of Healing First! and as an individual; I am also a steering committee member of the Maine Restorative Justice Coalition (MERJ), the Maine state chapter representative of the global coalition, Survivors For Justice Reform, and a survivor of serious harm, including assault and rape. We are in full and earnest support of LD 1911.

Healing First!, a Maine-based transformative justice collective led by survivors of serious harm, including sexual assault, intimate/domestic partner violence, and gun violence, has come to be because we see an immense need to claim a public collective voice as survivors who want restorative approaches and healing-based alternatives to incarceration in the wake of harm. This includes the destigmatization and decriminalization of those who have committed past crimes. *God forbid we each had our life trajectories forever defined and limited by the worst thing we've ever done or the worst mistake we've ever made.*

After decades of over criminalization and mass incarceration, 25% of Mainers now have a criminal record.¹ This presents a massive and permanent barrier— to education, employment, and housing stability. Communities are no less safe when eligible records are sealed, even for crimes of violence. Data has proven that these individuals are no more likely than the general population to commit a new offense 4-7 years after their most recent offense.²

States such as Michigan and Minnesota, which pair record-sealing policies with robust reentry support, have some of the lowest recidivism rates in the nation, which clearly illustrates the strategic value of clean slate laws in advancing public safety goals while and reducing a failing reliance on the criminal legal system.³ Furthermore, clean slate laws serve to stimulate and benefit the economy.

As survivors of serious violence who have overcome the impossible of healing from tremendous harm and trauma (no thanks to our punitive criminal legal system)— we know firsthand that tremendous transformation for all people, when given the necessary conditions and support, is possible— We, survivors of serious harm, are acutely aware that we are never defined by the worst of our life experiences, our mistakes, or harm we’ve caused— intentional or not. This stands for every human being.

I passionately restate Healing First!’s position of being in full support of LD 1911. If overarching goals of a justice system are to prevent or reduce crime and to foster rehabilitation— allow people their rehabilitation. Allow people who have already paid heavily for their mistakes and who have transformed for the better the opportunity to live and experience life and new opportunities with a clean slate. We urge you to invest in healthy and whole communities— and not prolonged, harmful stigmatization— by voting in favor of LD 1911. On behalf of Healing First!, we thank you for your time and consideration.

With gratitude,

Kage Johnson, on behalf of Healing First!

Citation:

1 Dr. Laura Chavez, Director of Research & Data, Clean Slate Initiative, <https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/public-resources/me-public-comment-092424>; Center for American Progress, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/clean-slate-toolkit/> For an excellent recent overview of the literature and research on these issues, see the John Jay College of Criminal Justice report, [Beyond the Record](#).

2 ‘Redemption’ in an Era of Widespread Criminal Background Checks, by Alfred Blumstein and Kiminori Nakamura, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/226872.pdf>

3 S. Anderson and J. Snider, R Street Institute, <https://www.rstreet.org/commentary/navigating-a-new-normal-automated-criminal-record-sealing-and-expungement/>