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LD 1911

Public Testimony in Support of Maine's Clean Slate Bill

Chair, distinguished members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Lisa Parisi and I am here in strong support of the Clean Slate bill.

This bill is more than a policy proposal—it is a lifeline for thousands of Mainers who have already paid their debt but continue to face lifelong punishment through old criminal records that no longer reflect who they are.

I am testifying today because I have seen firsthand how impossible it can feel to rebuild your life when every door shuts the moment a background check is run. Even people who have completely transformed—who are sober, stable, employed, parenting, and contributing to their communities—are still being denied housing, jobs, and opportunities because their past keeps reappearing long after their sentence has ended.

Clean Slate Is About Fairness and Public Safety

A criminal record should not be a life sentence to poverty. The Clean Slate bill is grounded in public safety and common sense:

- Research shows that people who receive expungement are less likely to reoffend than the general population.
- Within two years of clearing their record, individuals' wages increase by an average of 20–22%, giving them stability and reducing the likelihood of returning to the justice system.
- Stable employment and housing are the most protective factors against recidivism. Clean Slate does not erase accountability. It rewards rehabilitation and allows people to finally move on with their lives.

Maine Needs This Bill for Its Workforce and Its Communities

Maine faces a workforce shortage, aging population, and economic strain. Yet thousands of Mainers who are ready and willing to work are being blocked because of records that may be 10, 15, or even 20 years old.

Clean Slate would:

- Allow employers access to a bigger, more qualified workforce
- Reduce reliance on social services
- Increase tax revenue
- Strengthen families
- Support Maine's small businesses and communities

This is not about helping "other people." This is about helping Maine grow.

Why This Matters to Me Personally

This issue is deeply personal.

I have seen people who have spent years proving their change—completing treatment, working steady jobs, becoming role models—yet they are reminded every day that society still sees them only for the worst thing they ever did. That pain is real. The stigma is real. And the barriers are real.

I've watched people finally get clean, finally get their lives back on track, only to lose jobs, apartments, and opportunities because of a record that should no longer define them.

When a person is denied a second chance—even after they have done everything right—we are not increasing public safety. We are taking away hope.

Clean Slate acknowledges something simple:

When a person has changed, the law should recognize that change.

Clean Slate Is Not Automatic Forgiveness—It's Structured Redemption

This bill has built-in safeguards:

- Only eligible offenses are cleared
- There are waiting periods to ensure long-term stability
- Violent crimes and serious offenses are excluded
- The process is automated only after all sentencing requirements are met

- Victim rights remain intact

- It applies only to people who have shown they are no longer a risk

Clean Slate is measured. It is responsible. It is both compassionate and practical.

Closing

Maine prides itself on fairness, community, and second chances. The Clean Slate bill reflects those values. It ensures that when someone has truly changed, they are not forever held back by a record that no longer represents who they are.

Clean Slate makes our communities safer, our workforce stronger, and our justice system more just.

I respectfully urge you to support this bill and give Mainers the opportunity to move forward—to work, to thrive, and to live with dignity.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to Maine's future. I would be happy to answer any questions.