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Testimony Supporting the Concept of
Raised Senate Bill No. 1019

AN ACT CONCERNING THE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES, ERASURE OF CRIMINAL RECORDS FOR CERTAIN MISDEMEANOR AND FELONY OFFENSES, PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON ERASED CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD INFORMATION AND CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION WITH RESPECT TO MISDEMEANOR SENTENCES.

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 10, 2021

As the public policy office of Connecticut's Catholic Bishops, the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference supports the concept espoused in Raised Senate Bill No. 1019, namely "erasure of criminal records for certain misdemeanor and felony offenses." The Conference supports the goal of this legislation, but leaves final resolution of these initiatives to persons more experienced in criminal law to establish the boundaries of the criminal activities to which the final legislation will apply.

Catholic teaching affirms the purpose and goals of our judicial system. We are called to "protect public safety, promote the common good, and restore community."¹ Further, the Catholic community is called to believe, as our faith instructs, that justice is required for both victims and convicts – but not vengeance.

In 2000, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) published a statement - *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice* - which noted the following:

We are all sinners, and our response to sin and failure should not be abandonment and despair, but rather justice, contrition, reparation, and return or reintegration of all into the community.²

Proper reintegration of former prisoners aims to address recidivism, which improves public safety and helps former offenders to become productive members of our community.

The USCCB's statement also advocated for "new approaches" that "move(d) beyond...slogans... (such as 'three strikes and you're out') and...excuses of the past (such as 'criminals are simply trapped by their background'). Crime, corrections, and the search for real community require far more than...policy clichés of conservatives and liberals."

Raised Senate Bill No. 1019, the Clean Slate Act, can be one such "new approach".

Lori Stewart
Legislative Liaison

¹ *Joint Letter to Congress in Support of the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2017*. March 26, 2018

² <https://www.usccb.org/resources/responsibility-rehabilitation-and-restoration-catholic-perspective-crime-and-criminal>