



1212 New York Ave. N.W.  
Suite 900  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202-525-5717

*Free Markets. Real Solutions.*  
[www.rstreet.org](http://www.rstreet.org)

Testimony from:

Nila Bala, Associate Director of Criminal Justice Policy, R Street Institute

In SUPPORT of Senate Bill No. 691, “AN ACT concerning erasure of criminal records.”

March 29, 2019

Joint Committee on the Judiciary

My name is Nila Bala, and I am Associate Director of Criminal Justice for the R Street Institute, which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, public policy research organization. Our mission is to engage in policy research and outreach to promote free markets and limited, effective government in many areas, including re-entry. That is why Senate Bill 691 is of special interest to us.

Senate Bill 691 — the Clean Slate initiative — expands current expungement laws in Connecticut, allowing automatic erasure of convictions for eligible individuals. The R Street Institute strongly supports automatic record clearance because it supports human dignity, public safety and our community.

We believe individuals should be held accountable when they commit a crime. However, punishment must end at some point. Currently, individuals with criminal records are denied housing, employment, educational opportunities and the ability to reintegrate with society because of their records. This serves as a form of ongoing punishment that does not come with an expiration date.

The problem is vast — an estimated 40,000 people in Connecticut have a criminal record. When these individuals are denied the basic elements to sustain life — including housing and a source of income — it is both an affront to human dignity and harms public safety. Employment in particular is a key factor in reducing recidivism, and those with criminal records currently have great difficulty in obtaining quality employment.

This bill amends the cumbersome process that justice-involved individuals must currently undertake to clear their records. By making expungement automatic after a prescribed number of years for

misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies, this bill streamlines the process and makes it accessible for affected individuals. The bill only clears convictions when individuals have stayed out of trouble, which ensures that individuals are held accountable but are not perpetually punished.

Moving toward automatic expungement is not a partisan issue; it's just good policy. Just last week, a new study demonstrated that while individuals are often eligible for expungement, very few currently access this relief. The process is often too expensive and requires legal expertise to navigate. Senate Bill 691 would remedy this issue.

For these and other reasons, we support advancing Senate Bill 691.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nila Bala  
Associate Director of Criminal Justice Policy  
R Street Institute  
nbala@rstreet.org