

Christopher A. Johnson
Majority Whip, Legislator, 16th District
Chair, Social Services



Committee Assignments
Budget & Appropriations
Labor & Housing
Public Safety
Public Works & Transportation

To: Ben Boykin, Chairman of the Board of Legislators
Sunday Vanderberg, Clerk of the Board of Legislators

From: Christopher Johnson, Legislator, 16th District

Date: November 22, 2021

Re: Clean Slate Resolution

Attached is a Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass the Clean Slate Act which would require that most criminal records be sealed automatically after a specified period of time, therefore removing systemic barriers to stable housing, employment and education. This would allow millions of New Yorkers to participate fully in civic life and in their communities.

Please refer to the appropriate committee.

WHEREAS, 2.3 million people in New York State have criminal conviction records; and

WHEREAS, People with criminal conviction records face thousands of civil barriers to employment, licensing, housing and educational opportunities long after they have completed their sentences; and

WHEREAS, Racial disparities and socio-economic discrimination are rampant throughout the criminal legal system, and statistics and anecdotal evidence show that convictions for even low-level offenses result in cyclical harm and structural instability for individuals, families and communities; and

WHEREAS, Excluding individuals with criminal records from full participation in society through a system of perpetual punishment creates intergenerational trauma and exacerbates racial and economic inequality; and

WHEREAS, Black and Latinx New Yorkers are far more likely to be stopped, arrested, prosecuted, convicted and incarcerated in the criminal legal system than white New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, People of color are far more likely to be discriminated against based on a conviction record; and

WHEREAS, People who have been to prison lose an average of \$484,400 in earnings over their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Excluding individuals with conviction histories from the workforce costs the economy between \$78 billion and \$87 billion in lost gross domestic product; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 95% of incarcerated people return to their communities after serving their sentences; and

WHEREAS, Giving people access to jobs, housing, education and licenses to practice a trade increases their participation in the economy and reduces the likelihood they will return to prison, thereby making our communities safer; and

WHEREAS, Only approximately 2,500 of an estimated 600,000 eligible people — or less than 0.5% — have had their records sealed since New York’s current application-based sealing law went into effect in 2017; and

WHEREAS, A system of automatic sealing and expungement of criminal records is essential to provide relief to those who need it most; and

WHEREAS, The “Clean Slate Act” (S1553B/A6399A), sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie and Assembly Member Catalina Cruz, would require that most criminal records be sealed automatically after a specified period of time; and

WHEREAS, The Clean Slate Act would remove systemic barriers to stable housing, employment and education and allow millions of New Yorkers participate fully in civic life and in their communities; and

WHEREAS, Numerous other states, including Pennsylvania, Michigan, Utah and Connecticut, have already passed “Clean Slate” legislation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Westchester Board of Legislators calls on the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign the Clean Slate Act.