RESOLUTION   -2022

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

WHEREAS, People with criminal conviction records face numerous 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 justice 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, People of Color in New Yorker are far more likely to be stopped, arrested, prosecuted, convicted and incarcerated, and 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" (S1553C/A6399B), sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie and Assembly Member Catalina Cruz, would require that most criminal records be sealed automatically after their time has been served, the completion of any probationary period, plus a set number of years has passed without incurring any additional criminal charges. While the record would be sealed for civil purposes such as obtaining employment and housing, the record

will remain available when fingerprinting is required and to the police, prosecutors, and the courts; and

WHEREAS, The Clean Slate Act exempts certain offenses from being sealed, including sex offenses; and

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

WHEREAS, 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 supports the Clean Slate Act and calls on the New York State Legislature to pass S1553C/A6399B or similar legislation, and for the Governor to sign it into law; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Clerk of the Board of Legislators is directed to send a copy of this resolution to Governor Kathy Hochul, Lieutenant Governor Brian Benjamin, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, and the Members of the Westchester County State Delegation.

Dated   , 2022
White Plains, NY

COMMITTEEE ON
Legislation

Dated: February 7, 2022
White Plains, New York

The following members attended the meeting remotely, as per Chapter 1 of the Laws of 2022 and approved this item out of Committee with an affirmative vote. Their electronic signature was authorized and is below.

Committee on Legislation

Vedat Gashi

Mary Jane Shimsky

Christopher

Margaret A. Cunzio WOP