



Legislative Testimony  
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**ACLU-CT Written Testimony Opposing SB 901, An Act Concerning a  
Registry of Persons Convicted of Financial Crimes Against Elderly  
Persons**

Senator Hochadel, Representative Garibay, Ranking Members Seminara and Bolinsky, and distinguished members of the Aging Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 901, An Act Concerning a Registry of Persons Convicted of Financial Crimes Against Elderly Persons.

Protecting our eldest residents is important, but public registries will limit the ability of people living with criminal records to contribute to society and build successful and fulfilling lives for themselves and their families. Our state should pursue solutions to elder abuse that do not rely on the failed policy of creating new public registries.

The ACLU-CT believes in a society where all people, including those who have been convicted or accused of a crime, have the equal opportunity to contribute to society and build successful and fulfilling lives. Some of the biggest injustices faced by people living with a criminal record are the myriad collateral consequences flowing from that criminal record, which persist for years, even lifetimes, after a person finishes the punishment they were sentenced to. Collateral consequences turn any sentence into a life sentence. In Connecticut, people living with a criminal record face more than 550 legal barriers to full societal participation.<sup>1</sup> These barriers prevent people from

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<sup>1</sup> National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction, *available at* [https://niccc.csgjusticecenter.org/database/results/?jurisdiction=260&consequence\\_category=&narrow\\_category=&triggering\\_offense\\_category=&consequence\\_type=&duration\\_category=&page\\_number=1](https://niccc.csgjusticecenter.org/database/results/?jurisdiction=260&consequence_category=&narrow_category=&triggering_offense_category=&consequence_type=&duration_category=&page_number=1); *see also* Kelan

obtaining employment, housing, education, and services. Collateral consequences are not just bad for people who experience them: they are bad for children, families, and communities as well.

The employment barriers faced by people with criminal records have only worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic aftermath. Agencies that help find employment for people report that, compared to 2019, only half as many job seekers were able to find placements.<sup>2</sup> People living with criminal records are less likely to have access to unemployment insurance, sick leave, health insurance, and rainy-day savings to weather a health crisis.<sup>3</sup> Experts estimate that as jobs continue to return as the height of the COVID-19 pandemic wanes, people with criminal records will likely be the last to see their unemployment rates lower.<sup>4</sup>

Connecticut is making strides toward eliminating the collateral consequences of criminal records, but to achieve this goal, the state cannot continue to impose new collateral consequences by way of more public registries. Unfortunately, this is the exact effect of legislation that creates a new registry for a new class of people.

The ACLU-CT opposes legislation that adds to the labyrinth of collateral consequences that people living with a criminal record face every day in this state. Senate Bill 901 will add a new collateral consequence to the bucket. As such, we encourage the Committee to oppose Senate Bill 901.

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Lyons, *Council Begins Study of Discrimination Against People with Criminal Records*, CT MIRROR (Aug. 22, 2019), available at <https://ctmirror.org/2019/08/22/council-begins-study-of-discrimination-against-people-with-criminal-records/>.

<sup>2</sup> Charisse Jones, *You Just Want To . . . Have a Chance: Ex-Offenders Struggle to Find Jobs Amid COVID-19*, USA TODAY (Feb. 3, 2021), available at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2021/02/03/unemployment-ex-offenders-among-many-struggling-find-work/6656724002/>.

<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Vallas & Sharon Dietrich, *A Clean Slate in the Age of Coronavirus*, Newsday (May 25, 2020), available at <https://www.newsday.com/opinion/coronavirus/prisoners-clean-slate-coronavirus-covid-19-1.44824963/>.

<sup>4</sup> Akua Amaning, *Advancing Clean Slate: The Need for Automatic Record Clearance During the Coronavirus Pandemic*, CTR. FOR AM. PROGRESS (June 25, 2020), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/news/2020/06/25/486857/advancing-clean-slate-need-automatic-record-clearance-coronavirus-pandemic/>.