



Legislative Testimony
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Testimony Supporting House Bill 6948 an Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record on Housing Opportunities

Hello Senator Marx, Representative Felipe, ranking members Senator Sampson and Representative Scott, and all the distinguished members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Christopher Douze, I am a resident of Bridgeport, a father and with ACLU Smart Justice testifying in support of HB 6948, An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences or Criminal Records on Housing Opportunities. With respect to HB 6948, I can attest to the factual evidence that housing is a basic human right. From my experience, and the many others whose voices have been silenced by shame, guilt and humiliation, we have been stripped of a fundamental component of human dignity.

The challenges that a person with prior justice system involvement in Connecticut is equivalent to the story of Lot's wife in Genesis 19. She was told not to look back, because if she does, she will be turned to stone. Thousands of Connecticut prior-justice-system offenders have been turned into stone due to the simple fact that someone looked back. And what did they see when they looked back? They saw a past that a prior-justice-system offender is trying to escape from.

A past that absolutely cannot remain in its place in space and time. Simply because it's pulled into our present time while searching for a habitable and adequate space for protection from the elements. In particular, my experience has varied while dealing with housing. I was lucky enough to have a supportive family and friends structure upon my release from prison in 2015. But the times when I did have my background verified, I ran into issues, - particularly with my criminal history. While flat-out being denied by one landlord, and told there were "reservations" on me moving in due to my history by another, the insurmountable pain of the rejection is a feeling that words cannot convey.

HB 6948 has the potential to break our people free from their stone structures and help bring a sense of peace to the downtrodden.

Thank you for taking time to listen to my voice and our voices. I am happy to address any questions you may have.