Legislative Testimony

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**Sample Testimony Supporting An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record on Housing Opportunities**

Representative Felipe, Senator Marx, Ranking Members Sampson and Scott, and members of the Housing Committee:

1: My name is \_\_\_\_, and I am a resident of *[town]* and/or a member of *[organization].* I am here to testify in support of *[bill number],* An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record on Housing Opportunities.

2: Explanation of how your personal values and/or personal story align with supporting housing access for people who have been involved in our criminal legal system. Some suggested value statements:

* Housing is a human right: everyone should have access to safe, affordable housing.
* Our communities are stronger when everyone has access to a safe home and the opportunity to succeed.
* I believe in a society where all people, including those who have been convicted or accused of a crime, have equal opportunity to contribute to society and build successful and fulfilling lives.
* People involved in our criminal legal system who finish their sentences have paid their debt to society. They deserve to live their lives in Connecticut’s communities without barriers to being safe, productive, law-abiding residents.
* All people in Connecticut have paid the price of mass incarceration, yet we cannot afford the cost.

**[*Tell your story in 1-5 sentences.* *Add a sentence about any advocacy or communities you represent.*]**

3: Facts and data supporting housing access: Feel free to reference the Collateral Consequences Fact Sheet in the toolkit or use some of the information below:

* In Connecticut, residents with a criminal record face over 550 legal barriers to meeting their basic needs, like access to housing, making it more difficult to reintegrate into society and support themselves and their families.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Because people of color are disproportionately incarcerated, they similarly disproportionately face barriers ranging from background checks as part of rental and public housing applications, exclusion from fair housing law protections, eviction and housing forfeiture, and denial of rental or sale.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* *79 percent* of formerly incarcerated people have been denied housing due to a criminal conviction, and they are *10 to 13 times more likely* to experience homelessness than people who have not been incarcerated.[[3]](#footnote-3)
* 82% agreed that “people who have been convicted of a crime can turn their lives around and become productive members of our community if they can get the right kind of help.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

▫ 92% of Democrats ▫ 80% of Independents ▫ 71% of Republicans

* At the same time, policies that criminalize homelessness, like laws against loitering or panhandling, increase the likelihood that people with a criminal record will come into contact with the system yet again.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* Black women experience the highest rate of sheltered homelessness: *almost four times* *more* than white men and *two times more* than Black men.[[6]](#footnote-6)
* Stable housing is the base of ensuring successful reentry, yet our state makes it very difficult for people to actually obtain housing by constructing numerous collateral consequences related to housing.

**[*Add information about why you support this bill and why you felt the need to testify. Connect your personal story to the impact.]***

4: Conclude and ask for the committee to support the bill.

* The legislature must pass An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record on Housing to eliminate barriers to housing for people living with a criminal record. Thank you for your time and consideration.

***[Please also send your testimony to your state representative and state senator. Find your representatives here:*** [***https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp***](https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp)***]***

1. National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction, <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 Lyons, *Council Begins Study of Discrimination Against People with Criminal Records*, CT Mirror (Aug. 22, 2019), <https://ctmirror.org/2019/08/22/council-begins-study-of-discrimination-against-people-with-criminal-records/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Connecticut Profile*, Prison Pol’y Initiative (last visited Nov. 23, 2021), <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/CT.html>; Emily Widra & Tiana Herring, *States of Incarceration: The Global Context 2021*, Prison Pol’y Initiative (Sept. 2021), <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2021.html>; Lucius Couloute & Daniel Kopf, *Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment Among Formerly Incarcerated People*, Prison Pol’y Initiative (July 2018), <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>; David S. Kirk & Sara Wakefield, *Collateral Consequences of Punishment: A Critical Review and Path Forward,* 2018 Ann. Rev. Crim. 171 (2017), <https://niccc.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/resources/collateral-consequences-punishment-critical-review-and-path-forward> (surveying collateral consequences literature); Michelle Natividad Rodriguez & Maurice Emsellem, *65 Million “Need Not Apply”: The Case for Reforming Criminal Background Checks for Employment*, Nat’l Employment L. Project (2011), <https://www.nelp.org/publication/65-million-need-not-apply-the-case-for-reforming-criminal-background-checks-for-employment/> (finding that approximately 65 million American adults with criminal records experience employment-related collateral consequences). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families*, Forward Together & Ella Baker Ctr. Hum. Rts (Sept. 2015),<https://forwardtogether.org/tools/who-pays/>; Lucius Couloute, *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among Formerly Incarcerated People*, Prison Pol’y Initiative (Aug. 2018),<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>; *Five Charts That Explain the Homelessness-Jail Cycle—And How to Break It*, Urban Inst. (Sept. 16, 2020),<https://www.urban.org/features/five-charts-explain-homelessness-jail-cycle-and-how-break-it>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families*, Forward Together & Ella Baker Ctr. Hum. Rts (Sept. 2015),<https://forwardtogether.org/tools/who-pays/>; Lucius Couloute, *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among Formerly Incarcerated People*, Prison Pol’y Initiative (Aug. 2018),<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>; *Five Charts That Explain the Homelessness-Jail Cycle—And How to Break It*, Urban Inst. (Sept. 16, 2020),<https://www.urban.org/features/five-charts-explain-homelessness-jail-cycle-and-how-break-it>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Lucius Couloute, *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among Formerly Incarcerated People*, Prison Pol’y Initiative (August 2018), <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lucius Couloute, *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among Formerly Incarcerated People*, Prison Pol’y Initiative (August 2018), <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)