



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

Senator Marx, Representative Felipe, ranking members Senator Sampson and Representative Scott, and all the members of the Housing Committee, my name is Gus Marks-Hamilton and I work as the campaign manager with the ACLU of Connecticut. I am writing in support of HB 6984: An Act Concerning The Collateral Consequences Of Criminal Records On Housing Opportunities.

The ACLU-CT believes in a society where all people, including those who have been convicted or accused of a crime, have an equal opportunity to contribute to society and build successful and fulfilling lives. People who have completed their sentences have earned the opportunity to become productive members of their communities without a criminal record hanging over them for the rest of their lives. There are, however, over 550 legal barriers faced by people who have a criminal conviction in their past. These barriers are particularly felt in employment and housing, two areas that are critical to a person's rehabilitation after being convicted of a crime. When it coming to finding housing, people living with a criminal record have an extremely difficult time being approved for apartments, even if they are employed, have the resources to pay the rent and can demonstrate that they can be a responsible tenant.

In my own experience, as a person who has lived with a criminal record until being granted a pardon by the state of Connecticut, I have submitted over a dozen applications for apartments that were not accepted. Even though I was earning an income where I could afford the terms of the lease, had an excellent credit history, and have never been evicted from an apartment, again and again I was unable to find an apartment. Approximately a quarter of the applications were rejected due to my conviction from a decade in the past, and in others I never received a response. When I finally was accepted into an apartment, it was in a town far away from the original area I was looking to live. Since being accepted, I have lived there for seven years, always paid the rent on time and never had any issues with my neighbors or landlord. Whenever I have thought about moving, I instantly return to the frustrating search from earlier in my life. I would not want to expose myself to that

kind of rejection again, even if more time has passed since my original conviction. There is not, however, a limit on how far back in a person's history a landlord is able to conduct a criminal background check.

HB 6948 ensures that applicants with criminal records get a fair and documented review rather than being automatically disqualified for an apartment. The review includes the number of years that have passed and an evaluation of materials the applicant may provide the potential landlord. I urge the members of the Housing Committee to support HB 6948 and give people living with criminal records fair opportunities to find housing.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.