



Majority Chairman Marsico, Majority Chairman Petrarca, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

We write you jointly in support of House Bill 1419, legislation that would seal certain non-violent criminal offenses and allow ex-offenders to get their life back together with meaningful work and re-entering their communities.

HB 1419 will provide for the automatic sealing of criminal records for misdemeanors and charges not leading to convictions. Too many people in Pennsylvania are arrested or go to prison—and for far too long—for low-level, nonviolent crimes. All criminals should be held accountable, but punishments should be proportional to the crime committed. Yet after being held accountable, an ex-offender should be allowed to put his or her life back together. In our state, dated and irrelevant criminal records prevent people from obtaining jobs and productively re-entering a community once they have served their sentence.

Eliminating the collateral consequences of the criminal justice system will create opportunity for everyone in Pennsylvania. The scale of criminal, arrest, and incarceration is massive. As of 2015, more than 70 million people in the United States have a criminal record of some kind, roughly equal to the number of Americans with bachelor's degrees. Even when they reflect low-level crimes or charges that did not result in conviction, these records impose serious barriers to opportunity in the workplace and everyday life. Allowing Pennsylvanians who have paid their debt to society, or who never posed a threat to begin with, to move on from their pasts and rejoin the workforce would be a step in the right direction towards eliminating the collateral consequences of the criminal justice system.

Bipartisan criminal justice reform is a winning issue in Pennsylvania. Governor Wolf has signaled support for Clean Slate legislation, along with nearly 60 sponsors in both houses of the legislature. Nationwide, criminal justice reform has proven to be a winning issue that attracts widespread support from the voting public, and unites lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. Passing Clean Slate legislation will keep Pennsylvania on the right track towards lasting criminal justice reforms that promote human dignity, reduce costs, enhance public safety, and make victims whole in order to advance freedom and well-being for all.

Sincerely,

Beth Anne Mumford

Pennsylvania State Director

Americans for Prosperity



David Barnes

Policy Director

Generation Opportunity

