

September 24th, 2019

To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Algeria Wilson, MSW, Director of Public Policy, National Association of Social Workers Michigan Chapter

Subject: Support for Clean Slate Legislation Bill Package: House Bills HB 4980, 4981, 4982, 4983, 4984, 4985

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of the Clean Slate Legislation Bill Package, which would make criminal record expungements automatic for all people who are eligible for them. As the Director of Public Policy at the National Association of Social Workers, Michigan Chapter, a nonpartisan membership organization of professional social workers -we focus on supporting policies that improve the well-being of all members of society – particularly the most vulnerable.

And that's why we are here today, because the Clean Slate Legislation does just that, supports Michiganders, who have paid their debt to society and gives them a second chance to get it right. It gives them a chance to find safe and affordable housing, receive student loans to further their education, secure a professional job, and most of all it provides a sense of security and stability for families.

In Michigan, there are 787 state laws that limit people with a criminal record for getting a job, safe place to live, or a good education. Studies show that people who have kept their criminal records clear for several years after serving a sentence are extremely unlikely to re-offend, but the policies of many employers and landlords continue to punish them for decades. Passing the Clean Slate Legislation can provide relief to the heavy psychological weight that inhibits people from being able to fully integrate into society.

The best thing we can do as a society is to give people the opportunity to better their lives. We know the struggles, and lack of behavioral health services across the state of Michigan that exist for all. We know that we currently lack a strong workforce. However, the social work profession is one that values individuals with lived experiences. **We know that their lived experiences, create for a better practitioner as they are able to couple their implicit and tacit knowledge to create change for many. Clean Slate allows for a second chance to enter into the social work profession, a second chance at stability for themselves, and for so many others.** Clean slate is one that can help solve so many of our behavioral health workforce issues. However, it starts with providing a second chance.

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