



August 31st, 2022

To: Chairman Rob Kauffman and Members of the Pennsylvania House Judiciary Committee

Re: Support for House Bill 1826, Clean Slate Expansion

My name is John Patterson, and I'm here today representing Franklin Together, the reentry coalition of Franklin County. I'm a graduate of Penn State University, and my corrections and reentry experience includes completion of Offender Workforce Development Specialist training, a 160 hour curriculum developed by the National Institute of Corrections, and offered through the PA Department of Corrections. I've been a community advocate and volunteer for Franklin Together since 2017 on the Outreach committee and the At Large member of the Steering Committee since 2020.

Franklin Together formally started in 2015. In 2021, it became the state's first reentry coalition to submit documentation and become certified by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Our membership and leadership includes people from faith organizations, employers, social services, substance use recovery, mental and physical health providers, and county government and corrections professionals.

Franklin Together's mission is to develop strong community and professional partnerships to empower and support formerly incarcerated people and their families to reduce recidivism and encourage them to live successfully in the community. Franklin Together and its partners help people in a variety of ways like providing care packages of toiletries and other supplies to individuals leaving jail, creating and incentivizing participation in a peer-led support group, defraying the cost of necessities and employment-related clothing, streamlining the establishment of relationships with physical and mental health providers, locating affordable housing, and linking individuals with career planning and job training programs.

I, and others involved in the coalition, have found recipients of our support to overwhelmingly be people who want nothing more than to re-establish themselves in the community, obtain meaningful employment to support themselves and their families, and move forward with their lives without recidivism.

I'm speaking today in favor of expanding the Clean Slate Act, to automatically seal prior drug convictions and seal by petition several other felony convictions following a period of 10 years without recidivism and re-conviction. To that point, I'd like to share how it could help a couple Franklin County residents. I'm going to use pseudonyms to protect their and their families' privacy.

One is Trevor. Trevor has been continuously employed by a local manufacturer for about 5 years, and as a supervisor for 2 years. Earlier this year, Trevor learned he could no longer advance within the company due to his prior criminal conviction of Theft By Unlawful Taking. Trevor, admittedly, stole to support his drug addiction. He completed drug treatment, his criminal sentence, and paid his fines and restitution years ago. But no matter his efforts to turn his life around, he finds his criminal record holding him back. He and his family would benefit from an expanded Clean Slate.

Another resident is Robert. Robert was convicted of Possession with Intent to Deliver Marijuana in 2006. Although he has been a law-abiding member of the community for 16 years, Robert is unable to volunteer at his children's schools, including serving as an assistant athletic coach on one of his children's sport teams. This is due to his drug conviction prior to them being born. Robert and his family would benefit from an expanded Clean Slate.

Trevor and Robert completed their respective sentences long ago. That should count for something. They should not endure prohibitions for life, impacting their ability to hold a job or fully participate in their children's education.

On behalf of Franklin Together, I implore the members of this committee to support an expanded Clean Slate Act, specifically for the benefit of people like Trevor and Robert, their families, and our community as a whole.

Sincerely,

/s/ John Patterson

John Patterson
Steering Committee At Large Member
Franklin Together, Reentry Coalition of Franklin County