



April 5, 2015

Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee
Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair

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Tax ID # 93-0639815

Dear Chair Prozanski and Senate Judiciary Committee Members,

My name is Paul Solomon and I am the Executive Director at Sponsors, Inc. in Eugene, OR. I also serve on the Governor's Reentry Council and am the vice-chair of Lane County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council. For the past 41 years Sponsors has been providing Reentry Services in Lane County. We currently operate 12 buildings on 6 sites with 145 beds of transitional housing for people releasing from prison and jail and are currently in development with Lane County's Housing Authority to build a new 60 unit apartment complex for people with criminal histories.

I am providing this testimony in support of the proposed amendments to SB 363. This important legislation will prohibit the imposition of processing fees to process motions to aside a record of arrest or conviction. Criminal records have made it exceedingly difficult for law abiding people to put their past behind them. For those individuals who have demonstrated that they are worthy of record expungement, we should do everything we can to support such efforts. The current fees create an unnecessary burden and make it more difficult and unlikely that people will pursue such action, leaving them with records that may present lifelong barriers in the housing and employment arenas (where background checks are commonly utilized).

Given the vast number of people with criminal histories in our state, we should be supporting the efforts of those individuals who have proven that a mistake should not carry lifelong consequences. As a young man I made many bad choices that ultimately resulted in my incarceration for a variety of drug related offenses. In the preceding years, I have raised a family, acquired an education (graduating cum laude from the University of Oregon), own my home, volunteered in my community, and have worked diligently to assist people with criminal histories in their efforts to become taxpaying, law abiding members of our community. Yet were I to apply for an entry level fast food job or an apartment in the worst part of town, my criminal history from two decades ago could be used against me. We need to give people credit for a life well lived and offer them the opportunity to apply to have prior arrests or convictions expunged with minimal effort. SB 363 does just that without creating unnecessary financial burdens. I urge the members of this committee to vote yes on Senate Bill 363 and allow people who have an arrest or conviction the opportunity for expungement.

Sincerely,

Paul Solomon
Executive Director, Sponsors Inc.

Prisoner Reentry Services Since 1973

