

To Whom It May Concern:

Like many women in my shoes, my story begins with childhood sexual abuse. Despite their best efforts my family couldn't help me, they didn't know what was wrong and I didn't have the words to tell them. I turned to drugs as a way to cope with the pain I felt in my mind and body, instead I ended up with additional pain and a felony conviction.

Addiction closes doors to the opportunities young people are promised in society. When I stopped using drugs in 2012 I believed that doors would be reopened. What I have found is that doors don't open unless I have the right key, turn the handle and push. Over the past 5 years my life has changed completely. I have completed a Bachelors of Science in Psychology and maintained a 4.0 GPA. I was granted a year-long internship mentoring struggling students and teaching introductory psychology courses. I have completed over 4,000 hours of voluntary community service helping others who have struggled with addictions and trauma. I have worked for the same local business for nearly five years. Reading has been invaluable to my recovery so I started a project to create libraries in residential treatment programs around Portland. Currently I am half way through my Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling and Addictions Specialization. I have been awarded three graduate assistanceships that have allowed me to help create and open the doors of a new clinic serving the Portland are. Today I am present in my life, I live with integrity and am able to give and receive love and respect in my relationships.

I have been privileged to have the option of a life far removed from substance use and crime. My accomplishments have been earned through hard work and the support of others. Yet, even with the accomplishments and the support I have there are still many doors closed to me. I have struggled to find and been denied housing. I have been turned away for volunteer positions seeking to help adolescents facing the same struggles I did. I was told recently by counseling internships that they would love to hire me, but their hands are tied because of my background.

I was Arrested at 19, convicted at 21, and am now 26. By the time I am up for expunction at 31 I will have spent nearly a third of my life and all but one year of my adulthood – a period of time that will set the course for the rest of my life- carrying the stigma and restrictions of a felon.

Despite all the doors I have opened through my efforts and with the support of others I am still locked behind the doors of a felony. This bill would unlock that door for me and for many others who have worked so hard to change their lives and become meaningful and valuable members of our Oregon community.

Sincerely,

Hosia Rotstein

