



## Written Testimony in Support of Clean Slate Oregon

Submitted by Lucretia P. Murphy, J.D., Ph.D., Vice President, Jobs for the Future | Director, Center for Justice & Economic Advancement

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and members of the Committee,

I write to you today in support of Senate Bill 697 (Clean Slate Oregon). This bill is a common-sense solution to expand the pool of qualified and diverse talent for employers and provide meaningful second chances to thousands of deserving Oregonians.

At Jobs for the Future's (JFF) Center for Justice and Economic Advancement, we work at the national, state, and local levels, alongside educators, employers, workforce development specialists, policymakers, and most importantly, experts who are directly impacted by the criminal system to eliminate barriers that have prevented people with criminal records from having meaningful opportunities to transform their lives and achieve upward economic mobility.

As Vice President and Director of the Center, I have seen how the criminal record can be a permanent punishment that has the lifelong impact for an individual and also for their children and families, and the greater community. Experts estimate that there are [40,000 barriers](#) to reintegration facing people who have been released from prison, with 14,000 directly impacting the ability to access employment.

The 1.4 million Oregonians with criminal records are burdened by these challenges. Nearly nine in 10 employers use background checks to screen out applicants who have records. Unfortunately, being denied work is commonplace: Given the unprecedented workforce shortage we are facing as a nation, this broad exclusion of talented people becomes inexcusable.

Senate Bill 697 is a solution. [Research suggests](#) that hiring people post-incarceration leads to higher retention rates, lower turnover, and more loyal employees. Small

business owners agree: [84%](#) believe that Clean Slate policies will benefit employers by opening up a pool of job applicants that deserve a second chance. By clearing old criminal records and reducing barriers to entering the workforce, Clean Slate will expand the talent pool and give Oregon businesses a competitive advantage.

The benefits of automatic record clearing also extend far beyond the workforce.

- Safer communities. Five years after clearing, people who benefitted from Clean Slate were [less likely to commit a new crime](#) than the general population as a whole.
- Increases racial equity. [60%](#) of Black Oregonians have a conviction record, a rate 3.5 times higher than that of their white counterparts, and the negative impacts of a record are more acute for people of color. Automatic record clearing reduces these obstacles, diversifying the labor force and building a more equitable future.

Businesses across Oregon are struggling to find and retain top talent – but there is a solution in front of us. Simple, common-sense policy changes like Clean Slate are critical to creating a better society, and I strongly encourage you to move forward with this important effort. By automating the existing record clearing system, Oregon has the opportunity to increase economic prosperity for communities and create a more resilient workforce. I urge the Committee to achieve this by passing Senate Bill 697.

## Lucretia Murphy

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