



March 2, 2023

Re: Support for SB 697&698

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

My name is Leni Tupper, I am the founder and Director of the PCC CLEAR Clinic, where we provide free limited-scope legal services, including criminal record expungements. At the PCC CLEAR Clinic, we have helped thousands of people expunge their records, but there are thousands more who are eligible for expungement that we have been unable to help due to our capacity, our geographic location, or our lack of connection to all communities. The people least likely to be able to access services are the people who are historically most pushed to the margins- people with disabilities, rural Oregonians, immigrants and refugees, and more. And I fear that there have been many folks who come to the clinic for expungement services for whom the filing fees, fingerprinting, and court filing requirements were insurmountable barriers to realizing the right they have under the law to clear their record. This legal right is meaningless when it is not accessible to our community members. SB 697 and 698 go a long way toward making people's legal right to expungement a practical reality, by making some technical fixes to Oregon's expungement law, and by automating expungement of non-person crimes (carve outs exempting person crimes are coming in forthcoming amendments to the bill).

It bears repeating time and time again that at every stage of our criminal legal system, Black, brown, and low-income people are vastly over-represented. From racial profiling, to over-policing, to mass incarceration, too many of our most marginalized community members end up saddled with a criminal record that follows them long after they have fulfilled their sentence. These criminal records prevent people from shining their brightest, and prevent our whole community from reaping the rewards of everyone's diverse and amazing talents. By limiting people's opportunities for safe and secure housing, employment and educational

opportunities, public benefits, immigration status, and so much more, criminal records keep a metaphorical knee on people's necks. Increasing access to criminal record expungements through SB 697 & 698 is an act of social and racial justice.

I am part of the Clean Slate Oregon Coalition that helped get SB 397 passed in 2021– I want to thank the legislature for taking that step toward equality and accessibility in Oregon's expungement laws. SB 697 & 698 present an opportunity for the legislature to take the next step toward these goals. SB 697 will provide some technical fixes to the law, such as removing the outdated and onerous fingerprinting requirement, that holds many people back from expungement, and removing fines and fees as a barrier to expungement that keeps the most low-income Oregonians from getting ahead by clearing their records. And SB 698 provides for the automation of the expungement of non-person crimes (in a forthcoming amendment to the bill), so that people do not have to go through the complicated, inaccessible and costly process to get their records expunged. I hope these bills will not be the last, but merely the next step in a movement toward full expungement automation in Oregon. We at the CLEAR Clinic want to give all our community members an opportunity to access their right under the law to liberation from their criminal records. And the only way to do this equitably is through expungement automation.

The return on investment in these bills are immeasurable, because they are a true investment in the potential of our community. To heal from the devastation of mass incarceration and racialized policing and prosecution, one of the most important things we can do is remove barriers to success and well-being, especially for the people who have been most marginalized in our community. This is exactly what SB 697 & 698 do, by making criminal record expungement more accessible, and making non-person criminal records automatically expungeable. Please join me in supporting our community by making the investment in accessible and affordable criminal record expungement through SB 697 & 698.

Thank you,



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