



Dear members of the Oregon Senate Committee on Judiciary,

I write to you in support of Senate Bill 698 (Clean Slate Oregon). This legislation will strengthen our economy, expand the talent pool, and make Eugene and the entire state of Oregon a better place to live and work.

As President & CEO of the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce, I am committed to working with our local businesses to give voice to and address our community's needs for future prosperity. For more than 100 years, our Chamber has served as a leader in creating a vibrant and diverse economy that drives opportunity, growth, and wellbeing.

This commitment to creating a better and more prosperous Eugene is why I'm testifying in support of Clean Slate.

Approximately 1.4 million Oregonians, or one-third of the state's population, have some form of criminal record. For these individuals, this presents unnecessary structural barriers to employment, housing, education, occupational licensing, and other services that can last a lifetime. While [42% of those Oregonians](#) are currently eligible to have their records cleared, the existing petition-based system is costly, complex, and time-consuming; less than 7% will actually complete the process. In practice, that means hundreds of thousands of our neighbors are being denied the relief – and the economic opportunities – they deserve.

This has an enormous impact on Oregon's workforce and economy. As the post-pandemic labor shortage continues, business owners across the state are struggling to fill open positions, with thousands [more job vacancies than available workers](#). With unemployment already at a historic low, we need to expand the talent pool for our employers – and excluding eligible workers just because they have an old criminal record is hurting our state. By passing Clean Slate, we can make it easier for both the Eugene and Oregon business communities to access a vast, diverse, loyal, and productive workforce.

This bill will also save taxpayer dollars and strengthen our economy. The U.S. loses an estimated [\\$87 billion in GDP](#) per year due to the underemployment of formerly incarcerated people. Conversely, when people have their record cleared, their wages increase by an average of [22% within one year](#) – which means more money in the pockets of our residents and back into our economy. Small business owners [overwhelmingly support Clean Slate](#) to both expand workforce productivity and reduce reliance on government assistance.

By helping individuals with old criminal records get back into the workforce, we can also make the state of Oregon safer. Stable employment is one of the most effective ways to reduce recidivism. States across the country have passed automatic record sealing with no negative impact for public safety. In fact, the data shows that, after five years, individuals who had their records sealed are less likely to commit a new

crime than the general population. Clean Slate will give deserving Oregonians the relief they're entitled to and strengthen our communities in the process.

The collateral consequences of an old criminal record extend far beyond employment. There are an estimated [1,300 barriers](#) related to housing for individuals with old records. These individuals face discrimination, receive many more rejections than their peers, and are forced to spend much more money on housing application fees (which are rarely refunded). As a result, people with criminal records are [10 times](#) to [13 times](#) more likely to experience homelessness than their peers – which in turn increases the likelihood of criminal activity and intergenerational poverty.

Over the past several years, Eugene businesses have increasingly expressed concerns over housing insecurity and homelessness at the local level. Our Chamber has subsequently [prioritized this issue](#), setting out to better understand the complexity of the crisis and identify solutions that work for our businesses and the greater community. Clean Slate will help end the prison-to-homelessness cycle and reduce the need for emergency housing aid.

The benefits of automatic expungement are clear: Clean Slate will help bolster Oregon's workforce, strengthen our economy, and make our state a better, safer, and more prosperous place to live and work. On behalf of the Eugene Chamber of Commerce and its members, I thank the sponsors of this important legislation and urge the legislature to pass Clean Slate Oregon.

Brittany Quick-Warner
President & CEO, Eugene Chamber of Commerce