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LatinoNetwork

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To: Committee Chair Senator Prozanski, Vice-Chair Senator Thatcher and all the members of the Committee on Judiciary

Re: Support for SB 519, SB 697 and SB 698 - Improving expunction of records, Automation of juvenile and adult record expungement processes and improving justice in Oregon

Date: 3/1/2023

Latino Network was founded in 1996 by advocates for the needs of the growing Latinx community in Multnomah County. Since then, these grassroots beginnings have evolved into a continuum of services that support Latinx individuals, families, and communities. Our programs currently focus on education, advocacy & leadership, health & wellness, economic justice, youth empowerment & violence prevention, and arts & culture, engaging nearly 11,000 community members throughout Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties in the last year. We are the leading culturally-specific provider for Latinx youth, parent, and family services in the Portland area with the goal of serving the nearly 19% of Oregon's population who identify as Latinx or Hispanic.

Latino Network currently provides direct services to youth and families in Senate Districts 13 and 19-25 and House Districts 25, 37 and 42-50.

We support SB 519 to improve expunction processes for juvenile records to ensure youth who have engaged with the legal system. As providers of diversion and reentry services, we see youth and families changing their lives everyday, striving towards their personal goals and greater health and wellbeing. We also see the collateral consequences of a system that continues to use a one-size fits all approach and seeks to permanently punish youth for what is supposed to be time-limited interventions. SB 519 continues the long needed expunction reform that started with SB 575 in the 2021 session by addressing outlandish waiting periods to even be considered for expunction, moves the system to a 21st century automated process and eliminates fees to ensure more equitable access to expunction for those who are eligible.

We support SB 697 and SB 698 as a package of system improvement to the adult system of record expungement. Up to 1.4 million Oregonians—including many who have never been convicted—are saddled with arrest or criminal records that block their access to jobs, housing, education, starting a business or participating fully in social & civic community life. It is estimated that just 7% of Oregonians eligible for record clearance are actually able to get relief. So even when people are eligible and should be able to be fully engaged in their community, they continue to be limited by a record that no longer has any civic value. Research shows that on average, the wages of people who receive expungements increase by more than 20 percent within the first year. Nearly 9 in 10 employers (including the state of Oregon and community based programs funded with state dollars), 4 in 5 landlords, and 3 in 5 colleges use background checks to screen applicants and deny opportunities.



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Funding for our diversion and reentry programs like [Community Healing Initiative in Multnomah County](#) come directly from our legal system, the same system that has built a petition based process that is more likely to leave someone with a record even when they are eligible for expunction. These inverse incentives do not live up to our values. On the one-hand we are investing in people's healing and wellbeing; while on the other hand we are propping up a system that is more likely to leave someone with a record that has lifelong impacts, impacts that can sometimes undo the progress someone has made through engagement with community based services.

It is time we bring our expungement system into the 21st century and leave behind a slow, expensive, paper heavy petition based process. By taking steps towards automation, we can improve equitable outcomes, decrease collateral damage and ensure the investment we make in people's reentry are no longer curtailed by our own systems. Modernizing our systems means, when the state takes someone's liberty away it also holds the responsibility and accountability to ensure that liberty is returned - not by luck and not just for those who can afford it but - for everyone who has completed their sentence and is making good on their second chance.

Please support SB 519, SB 697 and SB 698