



February 8, 2024

To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Zach Winston, Director of Policy and Outreach

Re: In Support of HB 4097

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chair Andersen, Vice-Chair Wallan, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Zach Winston, and I am the Director of Policy and Outreach at the Oregon Justice Resource Center (OJRC), here in support of HB 4097. The OJRC works to promote civil rights and improve legal representation for communities that have often been underserved in the past: people living in poverty and people of color among them. We have extensive experience working with currently and formerly incarcerated Oregonians.

Accordingly, we strongly support HB 4097, which would streamline the expungement process, fix statutory drafting errors that were never intended by previous legislative reform efforts (2021's SB 397), establish appropriate timelines for the court to order records to be sealed once expungement is approved, prohibit fines and fees from barring an individual from clearing their record, and waive fines and fees after 10 years have passed.

Based on our organization's direct work with individuals impacted by the criminal legal system, we have witnessed how court-ordered financial obligations inhibit individuals from clearing their records, thus complicating their efforts to successfully reintegrate into society, secure stable housing, and attain employment. These outcomes are unjust and inhumane for returning Oregonians and are counterintuitive to the State's goals of reducing recidivism and increasing community well-being.

As a formerly incarcerated individual, I know firsthand how a criminal record can prevent someone from obtaining employment, housing, and more. We need to help Oregonians who are negatively affected by their past by clearing a path to expungement. It is inhumane to continue punishing individuals for their past when all other requirements have been met.

We urge you to pass HB 4097 out of the committee.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Zach Winston' in a cursive script.

Zach Winston
Oregon Justice Resource Center
Director of Policy and Outreach