



COMMUNITY LEGAL & EDUCATIONAL ACCESS & REFERRAL CLINIC

April 21, 2021

Dear Oregon State Legislature Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Leni Tupper, I am Co-Chair of the PCC Paralegal Dept and Co-Director of the PCC CLEAR Clinic, where we provide free limited-scope legal services, including criminal record expungements. At the PCC CLEAR Clinic this year, we have helped hundreds of people clear their criminal records, but there were hundreds more we had to turn away because they were not eligible under Oregon's outdated expungement laws. And there were hundreds more than that for whom the filing fees, fingerprinting, and notarization 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 397 goes a long way toward making people's legal right to expungement a practical reality.

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, secure, and sanctuary 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 397 is an act of social and racial justice.

The return on investment in this bill is immeasurable, because it is a true investment in the potential of our community. I know that there are many competing budget priorities before the legislature this year, especially due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. To heal from this

devastation as a community, however, 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. This is exactly what SB 397 does by making criminal record expungement more accessible. Please join me in supporting our community by making the investment in accessible and affordable criminal record expungement through SB 397.

Thank you,



Alena (Leni) A. Tupper