



To: Members of the Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation  
From: Sponsors, Inc.  
Date: February 23, 2021  
Re: Support for SB 397

Members of the Committee,  
On behalf of Sponsors, I write to you in support of Senate Bill 397.

Sponsors, Inc., is a national leader in the delivery of Reentry services. We offer a broad range of services—case management, employment assistance, housing, mental health services and mentoring—that people need in order to be successful upon returning to their community.

During testimony on February 22<sup>nd</sup> you heard stories of individuals, and their communities, who have been impacted by Oregon’s cumbersome, antiquated, and inequitable expungement statute. Many more of these types of stories and letters of support are on currently on OLIS as and I urge you to take some time to read those.

As you heard, criminal record often stands in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job, keeping custody of children - just to name a few barriers.

These barriers are built into state law, and in such a way that they can no longer credibly be called “collateral consequences”; these are explicit policy choices that extend the reach of our overly punitive criminal legal system into the basic daily needs of individuals and families.

Oregon’s criminal legal system has a legacy of disproportionately targeting Black, brown, indigenous, and other traditionally marginalized people and communities. Our current approach to past criminal records is a cornerstone of structural racism in our state.

Reforming our expungement statute provides an opportunity to redress the racial, economic, and social harms and havoc wreaked by an unjust system.

In Oregon, we need an expungement law that:

- **Makes expungement more far-reaching: We do not enhance** public safety by prohibiting people who have non-convictions on their record from being eligible for expungement. Ensuring that non-convictions are eligible immediately is in alignment with the presumption of innocence upon which our carceral system is grounded.
- **Makes expungement free:** fees should not prevent anyone from expunging a criminal record. Justice should not be provided only to those who can afford it.
- **Is equitable:** our current criminal legal system has disproportionately affected Black, brown, and indigenous people and other traditionally marginalized groups. Expungement laws should recognize that Oregon incarcerates Black men at four times the rate of White men. Through expungement reform, Oregon can begin to acknowledge that our criminal

legal system has applied and continues to apply differently and more harshly to Black, brown, and indigenous people and communities.

Through Senate Bill 397 we begin this long overdue process of reforming and modernizing our law. I urge your support for this effort and swift passage of SB 397.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Solomon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "S" at the end.

Paul Solomon  
Executive Director  
Sponsors, Inc.