

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, Senators,

Thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning. My name is Kenneth McGee Jr., I am a community member in Multnomah County. I am here today speaking in support of Senate Bill 397. As a person who is defined by their conviction, this legislation is important to me because I was sentenced as an adult at the age of 15 and served my time day for day. 5 years, 10 months later, after serving my time and having the physical cuffs and barriers removed, I now face new life barriers in the community, where I thought I could get a fresh start and be free. My criminal record hinders my personal growth, employment and housing opportunities, and significantly harms my emotional. I just want a chance to move forward with life.

For instance, due of my felonies I have been told I can't be a physical therapist. My past convictions label me as a violent person but if they actually knew me they would know I avoid all verbal and physical altercations. What's on paper doesn't and shouldn't define me. I was hoping that I could share the reality of how deeply a record impacts not just me but my family as well. I made a mistake as a teenager and can't be granted a real second chance in the community. My son sleeps on an air mattress in my living room, I have to work multiple jobs because I'm unable to attain a quality job or a job of my liking because I have felonies. I live in an area where we constantly hear gunshots and police sirens. I understand the severity of what I've done and take full accountability for my past actions and have learned from my mistakes. Like many others who share my plight we just need a chance to flourish and prosper. SB 397 is a step in the right direction and I urge you to support the bill.