



February 23, 2021

Re: Support for SB397 Relating to expungement

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

As the nation's largest bipartisan criminal justice reform group, the Justice Action Network is in strong support of Senate Bill 397. The Justice Action Network works to support smart, data-driven policies that protect public safety and reduce taxpayer costs, and SB397 will make Oregon safer and increase the number of justice-involved individuals who are able to successfully reenter the workforce, provide for their families, and grow the state's tax base.

There are currently nearly 1.5 million Oregonians who have criminal records, over a third (35%) of the state's population. These criminal records have far reaching consequences that remain long after the person has paid their dues and turned his or her lives around. These consequences include restrictions on employment, challenges in finding housing, and can hobble an individual as they work to support their families and fully rejoin society.

Record clearing is a proven way to ensure that individuals with a criminal conviction history can fully rejoin the workforce. Research has shown that once past convictions are removed from a person's record, their employment rates increase by 11% and their pay increases significantly (up to 22%). This bill will move Oregon in the right direction by expanding on existing expungement law, simplifying language for petitioners, adjusting the waiting period to better align with research protecting public safety, and eliminating counterproductive and unnecessary filing fees.

This bill also prepares Oregon to join the ranks of other states that have adopted automatic expungements instead of petition-based expungements. We know that the gap between individuals who are eligible for expungement and those that have their records expunged is significant: research estimates that only 7% of Oregonians have been able to have their records cleared, compared to the 45% of Oregonians who are eligible. But this bill will prepare Oregon to move in that direction, joining the ranks of other state legislatures that have passed [Clean Slate](#) legislation. And beyond a growing movement in state legislatures, expungement expansions and automatic expungements are extremely popular: in recent polling and across party lines, over 70% of Americans supported record expungement reforms.

We strongly urge you to support this bill and future efforts to expand opportunity to all Oregonians that have paid their debt as they work to support their families and communities. We urge you to approve Senate Bill 397 and forward it to the full Senate for consideration.

Sincerely,

Carl Filler

Justice Action Network