



BRIDGES
to change

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Measure 110 Implementation

From: Monta Knudson, executive director, Bridges to Change

Date: February 22, 2021

Re: Support for Senate Bill 397

Chair Prozanski and members of the committee,
Bridges to Change urges your support for Senate Bill 397, which reforms and modernizations Oregon's criminal record expungement statute.

Bridges to Change is a non-profit organization that provides substance use and mental health treatment, transitional and permanent housing, and mentoring services for individuals in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties.

At Bridges to Change our experiences with our clients, data, and research show us that the negative effects of a conviction rarely end when a person has completed their criminal sentence. Local, state, and federal statutes and regulations can make it all but impossible for some people with criminal records to truly begin rebuilding their lives. These consequences can affect everything from employment, voting eligibility, public benefit eligibility, and access to public and private housing.

While the true impact of existing expungement law is currently uncalculated, we know that it is profound. Oregon's expungement process is costly, complex, and lack of legal representation prevents the vast majority of individuals eligible to set aside their records from ever obtaining relief.

Addressing this issue would open doors for individuals to better access employment, housing, education and training opportunities. Studies show that one year after a record has been set aside, people are 11% more likely to be employed and are earning 22% higher wages. That means thriving families, safer communities and fewer taxpayer dollars spent on unemployment benefits and other public assistance.

Senate Bill 397 makes simple but meaningful changes to our current statute. By simplifying, streamlining and expediting our record clearance process, we can provide people the second chance we promise but have yet to truly deliver.

Thank you for your consideration and support of SB 397,

Monta Knudson
Executive Director, Bridges to Change