



March 2, 2023

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support Senate Bill 697 and Senate Bill 698

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,000 supporters statewide. **We strongly support Senate Bill 697 and Senate Bill 698, which would continue to streamline the expungement process and reduce the burden of expungement by automating the process for non-person convictions.**

Mass incarceration and overcriminalization have led to an excess of criminal records in Oregon. According to research done by the Paper Prisons Initiative, up to a third of Oregonians have a criminal record, and 42% of those people are estimated to be eligible for expungement. Yet, less than 6% of Oregonians with criminal records have received relief for which they qualify. At the current pace, it would take 77 years for Oregon to clear the backlog. Our BIPOC communities, which are disproportionately incarcerated at higher rates in Oregon, are the most impacted.

Having a past conviction can make people ineligible for job opportunities, professional licenses, housing assistance, education, volunteering with their children's activities, and more. These challenges trickle into every part of a person's life. What's more, our society and economy are worse off when our loved ones, friends, neighbors, and community members with criminal records are barred from fully participating in them.

Expungement lowers rates of recidivism by offering people a clean slate and the opportunity to move forward as full members of their communities. In 2021, the legislature successfully passed clean slate legislation with Senate Bill 397. SB 397 removed expungement fees, streamlined the expungement process, and expanded expungement eligibility. Senate Bill 697 and Senate Bill 698 are a continuation of clean slate efforts to remove barriers and ensure we are providing Oregonians with a fair shot at community integration.

Senate Bill 698 would develop an automation process in Oregon for non-person convictions. This is a step forward in ensuring that the burden is placed on the government, not the people, to begin the process of expunging. As we continue to expand clean slate laws, we will be able to legislate automation for all convictions eligible for expungement.

The passage of Senate Bill 697 and Senate Bill 698 would give individuals eligible for expungement a fair shot at community integration. **The ACLU of Oregon urges your support for Senate Bill 697 and Senate Bill 698, and asks you to pass them out of committee.**

Respectfully,
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