

March 2, 2023

RE: Support for SB 697 & 698

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of this important legislation. My name is Adam Gregg, and I currently work as a paralegal at a law firm in Portland. I have a great deal of experience with the criminal legal system from a variety of different angles that make my perspective valuable for these bills.

I spent almost ten years in Portland struggling with substance use disorder and trying to survive in whatever way I could. I managed to rack up numerous felony charges, and even had a brief window of sobriety. But, ultimately, my addiction led me to a 98-month prison sentence. While incarcerated, I spent a great deal of time taking accountability for my actions and looking for ways to educate myself. I learned about the law and different ways to help others to engage with our legal system. I spent thousands of hours reading statutes, taking paralegal courses, studying other peoples cases, and working to find relief for people entangled in the these systems. I helped successfully overturn convictions, seek clemency, establish parenting times, waive fees, change release dates and had my own criminal case vacated and dismissed. After my release I got a job as a paralegal and continue to use my knowledge and lived experience to provide help to countless others. This fall, I will be attending law school and look forward to the day that I can be a practicing attorney here in Oregon.

I say all this not to brag or be self-congratulatory, but to explain that in spite of these accomplishments and knowledge, which is very unique for someone in my position, I still required attorney assistance to calculate eligibility information and file the necessary paperwork to seek expungement for my criminal charges. I have successfully filed set aside motions, and am just waiting on Washington County and Multnomah County to grant those. While I am incredibly grateful that we have the reasonable and compassionate laws that we do around eligibility for expungement, I know for a fact that so many people I have helped in the past will never even know that their charges are eligible, and lack the support to prepare and file the paperwork.

My experience is that employment, housing, access to services and personal confidence are all tied to the existence of a criminal record. By automating this process, we will not just be making it accessible to people who truly need it, but we will be uplifting and enriching the citizens and community of the State of Oregon. My freedom from my criminal record stands as a turning point for me in the form of opportunity.

I strongly support these bills and hope you see the value they will add to the lives of thousands of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Adam Gregg