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Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Andersen and Wallan, members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Paul Solomon, and I am the former executive director and current senior advisor at Sponsors, Inc., of Oregon's nationally recognized re-entry program located in Eugene.

I'm here today to express my support and appreciation for the introduction of HB 4097.

At Sponsors, we know that people can and do change, and that a strategic intervention at the appropriate moment can serve as a catalyst in that change. I have been involved with the criminal system and can attest to the challenges that those with a criminal conviction face. I know first-hand the myriad different ways that a conviction history can create barriers to employment, housing, and access to other vital services. Not too long ago, I went through the laborious process of expunging my record for crimes that were decades old. There are thousands of Oregonians, like myself, who have turned their lives around and deserve to have the stain of a conviction removed from their records. With this bill we have an opportunity to significantly improve our expungement statute.

The complexity of our current petition based expungement process results in less than 10% of eligible Oregonians being successful in expunging their records. SB 397, in 2021, modernized our petition based system by decreasing eligibility wait times. However, cost barriers continue to impact people's ability to access expungement, and thereby employment opportunities. HB 4097 represent a critical investment in making government more responsive to our commitment to equal justice under the law, to reinforce public safety and to unleash

untapped potential in our workforce. \$1.6 billion is the estimated annual earnings loss associated with clearable convictions in Oregon.

HB 4097:

- Makes technical fixes that will further streamline the expungement process and correct statutory drafting errors that were never intended by SB 397's authors.
- Establishes a deadline of four months for the court to issue the order sealing records once a petition has been reviewed and approved by all relevant parties.
- Prohibits fines and fees from barring someone from clearing their record (excluding victim restitution) and waives the fines and fees after 10 years.

We know, through practice and research, that people who are on a positive path toward re-engaging in their communities and with their support networks have very low rates of recidivism.

Sponsors' staff work everyday to build trust and confidence with clients who seek to rebuild their lives and to instill hope that our system of justice supports the opportunity for a better future void of perpetual punishment. There is no doubt that HB 4097 is a worthy investment in a better Oregon.

Thank you for your time today and consideration of this vital legislation.