

Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6852

AN ACT CONCERNING THE WAIVER OF CERTAIN CRIMINAL HISTORY

Title: RECORDS CHECK FEES FOR AN INDIGENT PERSON SEEKING A PARDON.

Vote Date: 3/18/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/11/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

An indigent person is defined as someone poor or in need of assistance. The individuals seeking a pardon are oftentimes experiencing financial hardships because their criminal history blocks them from finding stable income. Criminal histories prevent individuals from stable housing, employment, health care and other resources needed to survive. If passed this bill will assist these individuals by removing the fees that are associated with seeking a pardon.

PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

Subsection (f) clarifies that Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection will not charge any person a processing fee, distribution fee, or any fee associated with electronic pre-registration or providing a criminal history report for the Connecticut criminal history request system.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Dr Emily Knox Policy Director Connecticut Voices of Children](#)

Director Knox states that formerly incarcerated individuals experience unemployment at a rate of 27% which is higher than the rate of unemployment during the Great Depression. She states that a criminal record reduces an individual's earnings between 16 to 26%. She states that these fees makes it more difficult to pay the fees associated with a pardon application. However, Dr. Knox also states that record expungement improved employment by 22%. She also state that 91 percent of individuals who had their records sealed and remained crime free gained access to more stable jobs

Jamey Bell, Executive Director of Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Executive Director Bell states that the current pardon process is lengthy and often inaccessible to many due to the expensive and sometimes hidden fees such as upfront charges for fingerprint cards and hidden mailing fees to obtain a criminal history record. Making pardons more accessible to those who are eligible would positively affect these communities. Bell describes situations such as this as a two-fold issue in which an individual cannot waive these fees but cannot also access the online process to pay these fees. There is also another issue in which many of these indigent clients do not have a credit or debit card with which to pay. Bell states that this all leads back to issues where they struggle to obtain better jobs and support themselves and their families due an inability to clear their records.

Natalie Smith, a Staff Attorney at New Haven Legal Assistance Association,

Mrs. Smith states that many of her clientele are low income or currently experiencing homelessness. This means that the fees required to obtain a pardon is a significant burden to her clients.

Sara Parker McKernan Policy Advocate CT Legal Services

Mrs. Parker states that many of her clients work hard to stay on the right side of the law. They have low wage jobs or work multiple jobs to provide for themselves and their families. The pardon process is a chance at a fresh start and can lead to better opportunities. Fee waivers are a critical means of enabling all members of our community access to all aspects of the justice system.

Jarod Stone, Law Student New Haven Legal Aid Assistance Association

Jarod Stone works with individuals with criminal convictions who would like to apply for pardons under the clean slate law. Stone states that these individuals often face barriers to obtaining housing, employment, and therefore struggle to reconnect with their communities. Stone states that for indigent populations like the clientele of the reentry clinic, fees some would consider small like \$30, is difficult to obtain. Jarod Stone states that for those with the financial means to readily pay such fees, we can accomplish the goals we set much easier than those who cannot. This significantly impedes or stops an individuals progress towards reentry into the larger society after obtaining their criminal records. Ariel Hudson who also works through the reentry clinic also echos these sentiments.

Arielle Hudson New Haven Legal Assistance

Hudson supports this bill and urges passage. She states that having a criminal background comes with barriers to accessing housing and other services. She states that this bill should become law becuase it will help those who cannot afford the fees and any other additional fees.

Joan Martin Farmington Connecticut Resident

Joan Martin states that she is in full support of HB 7073 and thanks the Public Safety Committee for writing legislation to help a struggling population. Joan Martin explains that in the past she helped a young man in her community who was homeless due to a fire in his apartment building and had transitioned to living in his car while working. However, she states that after his car was stolen, he lost his job. However, Martin also states that she was able to help him apply for a pardon by paying the \$90 fees for fingerprints and criminal records but that he dropped the process when it became too much to manage in his position.

Kharma Noel Ledyard High School Student

States that formerly incarcerated people are ten times more likely to experience homelessness than those who have not been incarcerated. Noel also states that a person who has been incarcerated and has not re-offended, has paid their debt and should not be further punished by being barred from access to the things that can provide them with more personal stability.

Olivia Rinkes

Supports the bill and expresses that if someone is looking to be pardon that only means that they have paid their debt back to society. Having a criminal record can prevent people from getting housing and jobs to provide for themselves.

Jess Zaccagnino Policy Advocate ACLU of Connecticut.

Mr. Zaccagnino states that 4 out of 5 landlords and 3 out of 5 colleges and universities use background checks to eliminate candidates with criminal records from their pools. Zaccagnino states that individuals with criminal histories experience negative affects to their credit scores due to encountering more credit checks when applying for school, employment, or housing. They also state that this also disproportionately affects communities of color because of institutionalized racism.

Gus Hamilton ACLU Connecticut

Mr. Hamilton supports this bill and states that 9 out of 10 employers, 4 out of 5 landlords, and 3 out of 5 colleges and universities use background checks to eliminate candidates with criminal histories. He states that this bill identify and address the financial hurdles individuals experience when seeking a pardon.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Geva Tinker

Date: 3/28/25