



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

Senate Contact: Jonathan Heppner (518) 455-2415
heppner@nysenate.gov

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Assembly Contact: Kerri Biché (518) 455-3888
bichek@nyassembly.gov

New York State Legislature to Pass Clean Slate Legislation

(Albany, NY) Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie today announced that the Legislature will pass the Clean Slate Act ([S.7551-A/A.1029-C](#)), which would establish the automatic sealing of certain conviction records after a specific period of time for individuals that have completed their sentences and meet certain eligibility requirements.

Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins said, “Clean Slate offers a genuine second chance to individuals who have fully paid their debt to society, enabling them to restart their lives and become positive contributors to their communities. By passing Clean Slate, we affirm our belief in redemption and improve our society by providing formerly incarcerated individuals a better opportunity to enter the workforce and establish stable lives. My appreciation goes to Senator Zellnor Myrie for championing this bill in the Senate, and to the New York State Legislature for their support in passing this vital legislation that will empower thousands of New Yorkers to forge a better future.”

Speaker Heastie said, “The Assembly Majority is committed to building a criminal justice system focused on rehabilitation over punishment. This bill will not only help us on that mission, but it will provide a solution to the workforce issues many local businesses continue to face. The

Clean Slate Act will give millions of New Yorkers a second chance to do the right thing and give back to their community once again.”

Senate bill sponsor Senator Zellnor Myrie said, “I’m deeply proud to serve in a legislative body that recognizes the economic, moral and public safety imperatives for passing Clean Slate. This legislation makes it clear that New Yorkers who have served their sentences and returned to the community owe no other debts before they can rebuild their lives, obtain housing and education, and secure gainful employment. Clean Slate means stronger, safer, and more stable communities. I’m grateful to my colleagues and to the broad coalition of New Yorkers who have spoken up for this bill, and I look forward to getting it over the finish line.”

Assembly bill sponsor Assemblymember Catalina Cruz said, “There are millions of people across the state who have served their sentences, completed parole, and are now ready to move on with their lives. I am proud to have sponsored this legislation that gives them the opportunity to start a new chapter. Who can argue against giving someone a second chance when they’ve already paid their dues to society?”

The Clean Slate Act provides for the automatic sealing of misdemeanor and felony criminal convictions upon meeting the following requirements:

- For a misdemeanor conviction, at least three years have passed since the individual’s release from incarceration or the imposition of sentence, if there was no sentence of incarceration;
- For a felony conviction, at least eight years have passed from the date the individual was last released from incarceration;
- The individual does not have a criminal charge pending; and
- The individual is not currently under the supervision of any probation or parole department.

Class A felonies for which a maximum life imprisonment sentence may be imposed and convictions requiring registration as a sex offender are not eligible for sealing.

The law would allow access to or the release of these sealed records to:

- Courts and prosecutors during a new criminal case;
- Law enforcement officers under the scope of an investigation;
- Any entity that is required under state or federal law to conduct a fingerprint-based background check or an entity authorized to conduct a fingerprint-based background check where a job applicant would be working with children, the elderly or vulnerable adults; and
- A licensing officer processing a firearm license application.

Additionally, the law will not affect or invalidate any active order of protection, require the destruction of DNA submitted to the statewide DNA database as part of a conviction, or require that DMV records be destroyed or sealed.

The Clean Slate Act will help prevent discrimination among formerly incarcerated New Yorkers to help give them a better opportunity to secure a job and find stable housing. This legislation will also boost the state's economy and workforce, as more qualifying New Yorkers with past convictions will be able to enter the labor market and increase their earnings. Additionally, the law provides for keeping people's conviction records accessible for certain law enforcement purposes and other necessary needs under specific circumstances. New York will be the 11th state to enact legislation that provides for the automatic sealing of criminal convictions.

The Clean Slate Coalition said, "The Clean Slate Act is historic legislation that will bring relief to millions of New Yorkers who have been excluded from economic opportunity, stable housing, and higher education for far too long. With unprecedented support across the state, now is the time to enact Clean Slate into law. We thank the Legislature for their commitment to this important bill which will allow New Yorkers to support their families, create stronger and safer communities, and boost our economy. While more work remains to be done to end perpetual punishment for all people, we call for the legislature to pass the Clean Slate Act and the Governor to sign the bill without delay."

Alvin Bragg, Manhattan District Attorney said, "The passage of the Clean Slate Act is a major win for public safety, justice and fairness. New Yorkers who have criminal convictions can finally rebuild their lives and will no longer face a lifetime of perpetual punishment that locks them out of jobs, housing, and education. I thank the impacted individuals and advocacy groups who have championed this bill for the past several years and our legislative leaders for coming together to ensure our communities will grow stronger."

Eric Gonzalez, Brooklyn District Attorney said, "People with criminal convictions who have been held accountable and paid their debt to society should not have the doors of opportunity closed to them for the rest of their lives. The Clean Slate bill is a sensible solution that allows these individuals to reclaim their lives by having access to jobs, education, and stable housing. I commend the Legislature and the Governor for negotiating a bill that appropriately balances fairness and public safety."

Darrel Clark, Bronx District Attorney said, "When people serve their sentence and remain law-abiding, Clean Slate, for those who are eligible, will help keep them on track by sealing a criminal record, which removes potential barriers to housing, employment, education, and social services. Equal access to opportunity after criminal justice involvement serves us all by reducing the chances of recidivism thereby improving public safety."

Melinda Katz, Queens District Attorney said, “Our communities are safer when those with prior convictions, who have served their time and obeyed the law for many years thereafter, are allowed an opportunity to earn a paycheck and build a better future. While prosecutors and law enforcement will continue to have access to prior records so that we may do our jobs effectively, this law strikes the right balance between public safety and rehabilitation for those who choose a better path.”

Elizabeth Kocienda, director of advocacy, New York City Bar Association said, “The New York City Bar Association continues its support for passage of the Clean Slate Act and we applaud policymakers for their steadfast efforts to deliver a bill that both the Legislature and the Governor can support. While the bill is not as expansive as we originally supported, we join the diverse coalition of groups and businesses – including 49 law firms – in supporting the amended Act. It will allow millions of New Yorkers with criminal conviction histories the opportunity to move forward, achieve financial and housing security, and become vital participants in New York's economy. As City Bar President Susan J. Kohlmann wrote in the New York Law Journal in March, ‘The City Bar supports innovative legislative solutions to ameliorate those consequences that result in essentially a civil life sentence experienced by individuals with conviction histories. The Clean Slate Act is one such solution.’”

George Gresham, president of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East said, “The Clean Slate Act is a significant step towards reforming a punitive and often counterproductive criminal justice system in New York State. This legislation will address systemic barriers to jobs, housing, and education while lowering recidivism and creating safer communities. The healthcare workers of 1199SEIU applaud Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie, the Clean Slate coalition, and our partners in the legislature for championing this reform to advance equity, justice, and prosperity in New York.”

Paul Zuber, executive vice president, The Business Council of New York State said, “Many of The Business Council's members have long supported second-chance initiatives committed to reducing barriers for the formerly incarcerated. We are pleased this common-sense legislation has finally passed, allowing our state's economy to grow by giving people from historically marginalized communities a new opportunity and our employers, who are struggling to hire new talent, access to a larger pool of individuals ready to work.”

Kathryn Wylde, president and CEO, Partnership for New York City said, “The passage of Clean Slate legislation affirms New York's commitment to economic opportunity for all, including those who have been involved in the criminal justice system. This will expand the talent pool upon which employers can draw. We applaud the thoughtful way the Legislature, the Governor, and advocates have approached the design of a law that can work for all parties.”

John Ravitz, executive vice president of the Business Council of Westchester said, “The Business Council of Westchester (BCW), the county's largest business membership organization

focusing on economic development and advocacy, applauds the New York State Legislature for passing the Clean Slate legislation. This bill will play a key role in helping New York State employers deal with the ongoing workforce shortage. The BCW supported the legislation because it will help a population of New Yorkers who have paid their debt to society and should have the opportunity to have a chance to obtain a job. The BCW also applauds the sponsors of the bill who listened to the concerns of employees and added strong checks and balances and more liability protections for employers in the bill.”

Kate Wagner-Goldstein, director, New York Reentry Initiatives at the Legal Action Center said, “The Clean Slate Act is essential reform to end perpetual punishment for the millions of New Yorkers who have conviction records. The Legal Action Center urges the Assembly and Senate to pass the Clean Slate Act immediately to allow people to reach their potential, support their families and strengthen communities across the state.”

Rosemary Rivera, Co-Executive Director of Citizen Action of New York said, “By passing Clean Slate, Senate and Assembly leadership has given opportunities back to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, who have continued to face lifelong restrictions after completing their sentences. This is a victory for racial justice because our penal system continues to disproportionately incarcerate Black and Brown people, and by giving us an opportunity for a Clean Slate, our communities will have a better opportunity to thrive.”

Aleksandra Ciric, staff attorney, Case Closed Project at The Legal Aid Society said, “This legislation will help those New Yorkers living with a criminal conviction start anew, increasing their access to jobs, housing, critical services, and other opportunities, all while furthering public safety throughout our state. The Legal Aid Society thanks the Legislature for championing Clean Slate, and we urge Governor Hochul to sign this needed measure into law once it passes both chambers later this week.”

Bronx Defenders said, “Clean Slate is a step to ending the perpetual punishment of our legal system for millions of New Yorkers who have paid their debt to society and have not been afforded the opportunity to be civically whole. We look forward to working with the governor and legislature to continue to dismantle the myriad of barriers erected to prevent full citizenship of those convicted of offenses.”

Kercena Dozier, executive director, Children’s Defense Fund-New York said, “Thanks to the tireless efforts of coalition members across New York State, our legislative leaders in Albany have passed Clean Slate! We celebrate this critical racial justice legislation and the opportunity it offers to permit millions of our neighbors to fully participate in our communities, go to school, find meaningful work, live in stable housing, and care for their families. We urge Governor Hochul to stand with us and sign this important legislation into law now.”

Murad Awawdeh, executive director, New York Immigration Coalition said, “The Clean Slate Act will go a long way towards ensuring that New Yorkers no longer have to endure discrimination and civil damage due to past interactions with the criminal justice system. Clean Slate addresses the disproportionate effect of perpetual punishment of bars to basic opportunities and services on Black and brown New Yorkers. Now, our communities will be able to obtain stable employment, secure housing, and licenses to practice trades without fear that their conviction record will be an impassable hurdle.”

Kate Rubin, Director of Policy, Youth Represent said, "Clean Slate is a transformative victory for young people in New York. First, because it will automatically seal the records of hundreds of thousands of people who were arrested and convicted when they were teenagers or young adults, and who have faced lifelong barriers as a result. And second, because it is one step toward closing the racial wealth gap that has been made worse by a system that punishes Black and Latiné people not only disproportionately, but perpetually. Youth Represent thanks Senator Myrie and Assemblymember Cruz, and the Clean Slate campaign for their incredible leadership."

Jared Trujillo, policy counsel, New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) said, “Criminal convictions create lifelong barriers to employment, housing, and other necessities that New Yorkers need to rebuild their lives with dignity. This is particularly true for Black and Brown New Yorkers, who have historically borne the brunt of racist over-policing and criminalization. While we are disappointed that fewer New Yorkers with felony convictions who have successfully reentered society will be able to benefit from Clean Slate than the Legislature intended, this legislation will still benefit millions of New Yorkers who are currently trapped in cycles of poverty and punishment for a past criminal conviction. We urge the Governor to sign this common-sense bill into law without delay and remain committed to ending perpetual punishment for all people.”

Nikki Kateman, political & communications director, Local 338 Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU)/United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) said, “The historic passage of the Clean Slate Act means that thousands of justice-involved New Yorkers will receive a second chance. As longtime advocates for workers, Local 338 RWDSU/UFCW understands the types of hurdles members of our communities face while trying to re-enter the workforce and regain their financial independence. For decades, these workers have been at an unfair disadvantage and continuously punished despite repaying their debts to society. We are thrilled that the State Legislature has decided to wipe the slate clean for justice-involved individuals and give them the opportunity to thrive in New York’s workforce and achieve economic security.”

Michael Prohaska, business manager of the Mason Tenders District Council of Greater New York and Laborers Local 79 said, "Clean Slate thankfully no longer has to wait and 2.3

million New Yorkers can finally close a chapter of their lives that's shaped the future for them and their families. Construction is an industry where a person's past doesn't dictate their future, and our union knows firsthand the life-changing power this policy will have. Thank you Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Carl Heastie, and bill sponsors Assemblymember Catalina Cruz and Senator Zellnor Myrie for your tireless work to pass this policy.”

Bob Duffy, president and CEO of Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce said, “In New York, a conviction on a person’s record can block opportunities like stable jobs, licenses to practice trades, and secure housing. When a person is convicted of a crime and sentenced to incarceration, he or she has ‘repaid their debt to society’ once they are released. Greater Rochester Chamber has been proud to support the Clean Slate Act, and we are grateful to Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie, Senator Myrie, Assemblymember Cruz, and all those who pushed for its passage. Enacting this legislation is a necessary and important step toward righting the wrongs that have left behind a huge population of New Yorkers.”

Henry Garrido, executive director, District Council 37 said, “We applaud our State lawmakers for passing the Clean Slate Act. No one should suffer a lifetime of closed doors for past mistakes, especially those who have served their time. With this legislation, more New Yorkers can now live without discrimination for their history and move toward a future with new opportunities to contribute to society.”

Randy Peers, president and CEO, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce said, “The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce was proud to be the first Chamber of Commerce in NYS to support Clean Slate legislation and help to underscore this as an economic, as well as a social issue. Small businesses need workers, and those who were justice-involved deserve the right to earn a respectable living. This is a win-win for all.”

Nan Gibson, executive director, JP Morgan Chase Policy Center said, “Too many New Yorkers are blocked from employment due to their past criminal records, which has real economic costs for individuals, their families, local communities, and the broader economy. The passage of the Clean Slate Act is a step in the right direction, and we applaud the bipartisan support demonstrated by the Senate, Assembly leadership, and Governor Hochul. Clean Slate will help bolster the state’s economy by more fully tapping the talents of the 2.3 million New Yorkers directly impacted by the legislation and offer a real chance at greater economic opportunity and more equitable growth.”

The Business Council of Westchester (BCW) said, “The county’s largest business membership organization focusing on economic development and advocacy applauds the New York State Legislature for passing the Clean Slate legislation. This bill will play a key role in helping New York State employers deal with the ongoing workforce shortage. The BCW supported the legislation because it will help a population of New Yorkers who have paid their debt to society

and should have the opportunity to have a chance to obtain a job. The BCW also applauds the sponsors of the bill who listened to the concerns of employees and added strong checks and balances and more liability protections for employers in the bill.”

Dennis G. Trainor, vice president, Communications Workers of America (CWA) District 1 said, “A New Yorker who has paid their debt to society should have the same opportunity as any of us to join the workforce, provide for themselves and their family, and contribute to our economy. Passing the Clean Slate Act will benefit not just millions of individual New Yorkers but help strengthen our state and our community as a whole.”

LaFawn Davis, senior vice president, Indeed said, “Employing individuals with criminal records remains an important public priority that has far-reaching positive impacts on society. At Indeed, we believe advancing opportunities for job seekers with criminal records is a necessary step toward a more equitable workforce. We are proud to support Clean Slate legislation.”

Deputy Chief Wayne Harris (Ret.) who served with the Rochester Police Department for three decades and now serves on the board of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) said, "This is a huge victory for justice. People who pay their debt to society deserve a second chance. Allowing them to reintegrate is a win for public safety too.”

Melinda Agnew, member of the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) said, “The passage of the Clean Slate Act will be transformative for me and millions of New Yorkers who share my struggle. In October of 1999, I was sentenced to three years probation. I completed my sentence, and since then, I have become a mom and a grandma, returned to school, and obtained both my bachelor’s degree and my master’s. Yet 25 years later, despite all that I have done to give back to my community, I am still turned away from jobs, denied promotions, and rejected from housing programs because of my two-decade-old conviction. We celebrate the Legislature for their commitment to Clean Slate and call on Governor Hochul to sign this critical legislation into law as soon as it is passed by the Senate and Assembly later this week.”

Rabbi Hilly Haber, Central Synagogue and The NY Jewish Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform said, "In Jewish tradition, there is no such thing as perpetual punishment or permanent exile. As a people, we believe in the power and practice of *teshuvah*; the ability for each one of us to repent, atone, and return with a “clean slate.” Our criminal legal system today too often denies people the opportunity to fully return to their communities. Clean Slate has been carefully designed to help people come home from prison and flourish in the community. It creates a true pathway of teshuva for New Yorkers who are coming home and a roadmap to a safe and healthy New York for all New Yorkers.”

Natasha Lifton, director of government relations, Trinity Church Wall Street said, “We thank the Legislature for doing its part to end the perpetual punishment of our fellow New Yorkers who have completed their sentences and paid their debt to society by passing the Clean

Slate Act. We stand with the broad coalition of supporters of this landmark legislation and call on Governor Hochul to sign it into law.”

David R. Jones, president and CEO, Community Service Society of New York said, “The perpetual punishment of stale criminal records has always fallen more harshly on communities of color, perpetuating the racial wage gap and generational poverty. Clean Slate will free millions of New Yorkers from this burden and unleash their economic potential, improving their lives and communities. Though the bill leaves much undone, it is a victory years in the making, and we use this moment of celebration to recommit ourselves to the work to come.”

Joeann Walker, senior attorney at Con Edison and CEO Action for Racial Equity Fellow said, “Con Edison celebrates the historic passage of the Clean Slate Act, which will open new doors to more than 2.3 million justice-involved New Yorkers.”

Ames Grawert, senior counsel in the Justice Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law said, “The Clean Slate Act is a great victory for racial and economic justice in New York State. It would give millions of New Yorkers who are trying to rebuild their lives a better chance at jobs, college, and housing. Brennan Center research shows that New Yorkers with criminal records collectively lose \$12.6 billion in earnings every year. We urge the governor to sign the Clean Slate Act without delay.”

Serena Martin-Liguori, executive director, New Hour For Women and Children said, “We applaud the passage of the Clean Slate Act. Signing this bill into law will allow formerly incarcerated mothers, often the primary caretakers for their children, to no longer be discriminated against when applying for jobs. Too often, women are perpetually penalized and can not properly support themselves or their children as they are continuously refused employment. We encourage Governor Hochul to sign this bill expediently and create a historic second chance for thousands of individuals.”

Jonathan McLean, president and CEO of the Center for Alternative Sentencing & Employment Services (CASES) said, “Passage of Clean Slate is a victory for the millions of New Yorkers with criminal convictions, mostly Black and Brown men like me. When I was released from prison, I had to lie on job applications for years, because I knew if I was honest that I would not be hired, even though I was just trying to support myself and be a part of my community. This legislation is an essential step in ending perpetual punishment and allowing people to move past their worst days. It will be hugely beneficial to the individuals we serve at CASES. I commend the Legislature for passing Clean Slate.”

Tina Luongo, Chief Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society said, “This is a moment for the millions of New Yorkers who have been forced to suffer under the cloud of a criminal conviction that has long impeded their ability to secure employment, housing, educational opportunities, benefits and other critical needs. With the stroke of a pen, Governor

Kathy Hochul can end this nightmare and transform the lives of so many of our clients and their families for the better, and we urge her to act without any further delay. The Legal Aid Society lauds bill sponsors Senator Zellnor Myrie and Assemblymember Catalina Cruz for championing Clean Slate, and we urge lawmakers to build on this success next session by passing the Treatment Not Jail Act, Communities Not Cages, comprehensive parole reform and other needed measures to overhaul our unjust and punitive criminal legal system."

Robert Willis, Justice Advocate Coordinator, Latino Justice Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF) said, "We cannot expect formerly incarcerated persons to reintegrate successfully into their communities without clearing their path of obstacles to access to jobs, housing, education, and other basic resources. We support the Clean Slate Act because automatically sealing certain criminal records and giving people a fresh start helps us live up to our society's principles that everyone deserves an equal opportunity to contribute to the well-being and future of their families and communities without being encumbered by past mistakes."

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New York State Senate | senatedemocraticmajority@nysenate.gov | 518-455-2415

