



Memorandum of Support for the “Clean Slate Bill” S1553A (Myrie) / A06399 (Cruz)

Getting Out and Staying Out (GOSO) strongly supports the Clean Slate Bill and encourages the Governor to sign S1553A (Myrie) / A6399 (Cruz) into law.

GOSO empowers youth and young adults impacted by arrest and incarceration on a journey of education, employment, and emotional well-being and collaborates with under-resourced New York City communities to support a culture of nonviolence. From our base in East Harlem, GOSO operates a highly effective reentry program that helps more than 1,200 participants annually to avoid further involvement with the criminal legal system by assisting them in reshaping their futures through educational achievement, meaningful employment, and financial independence. Signing the Clean Slate Bill into law will provide a critical step in assisting GOSO’s current and former participants in rebuilding their lives.

2.3 million New Yorkers, including more than 15,000 former GOSO participants, currently live in a state of perpetual punishment due to their conviction records, which severely limits their access to essential opportunities such as employment, housing, education, and other life essentials required to thrive in their communities. Furthermore, due to racism in our criminal legal system, these civil consequences disproportionately impact black and brown New Yorkers, deepening existing racial inequalities. GOSO participants face significant barriers due to systemic injustices and the stigma that comes from legal system-involvement, which present significant barriers to the change they want to see in their lives. Despite these formidable challenges, our participants consistently demonstrate maturity, resilience, and a strong desire to earn the credentials necessary to build positive futures.

In 2017, New York State implemented a system for clearing records through a structured application process aimed at mitigating the negative consequences of a criminal conviction on individuals. However, this system has proven to be an inadequate remedy due to its complexity and the need for legal assistance. In spite of the system’s shortcomings, the positive impact of records clearance remains significant, with research demonstrating an 11 percent increase in employment prospects and 20 percent higher wages for individuals who have had their records expunged. By expediting the process of record clearance, the Clean Slate Bill provides a critical step in ensuring that young people with criminal records are able to successfully reintegrate into society and access the opportunities they deserve. Passage of the Clean Slate Bill will allow GOSO participants to benefit from these life-changing advantages and assist them in rebuilding their lives.

Signing **S1553A (Myrie) / A06399 (Cruz)** into law will create a paradigm shift as it relates to how the state addresses individuals in crisis. GOSO has a proven track record of effectively assisting young individuals in crisis by demonstrating how significant investments in their future during such times will lead to positive long-term outcomes for them. The bill, if signed into law, will provide a level of access to opportunity that the young people that we serve will benefit from tremendously.

A history of conviction creates long-term barriers to achieving economic stability and active community participation, impacting not just individuals but also their families. In the context of education and employment, automatic expungement will ensure that GOSO's participants will not miss out on job opportunities or run the risk of college rejection because of a conviction that could have been expunged. New York has a history of enacting meaningful reforms to support full participation in the life and economy of the state. The Governor has the opportunity to uphold this tradition by signing the Clean Slate Bill into law.

We urge the Governor to immediately sign the Clean Slate Bill, represented by **S1553A (Myrie)** / **A6399 (Cruz)**, into law. Any questions can be directed to Adine Schuman, Chief Development Officer, Getting Out and Staying Out, **aschuman@gosonyc.org**.