A criminal record should not be a life sentence to unemployment, underemployment, and poverty.

Connecticut Context:
• About 13,400 people are incarcerated in the state of Connecticut currently. About 5,000 leave prison each year and return to our communities to rebuild their lives. ¹

The “Shackles” of a Criminal Record:
• 60% of people who have been incarcerated remain unemployed one year after release.²
• Formerly incarcerated men can expect to work 9 fewer weeks per year & earn 40% less. Together, this amounts to an average overall loss of $179,000 by age 50.³
• Criminal records turn people into second-class citizens, barring them from many professions, jobs, housing programs, and more. Nearly 9 in 10 employers,⁴ 4 in 5 landlords,⁵ and 3 in 5 colleges⁶ use criminal background checks, putting employment, housing, and higher education out of reach.

“It shall come about on that day,” declares the Lord Almighty, “that I will break the yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves.” Jeremiah 30:8

Disparate Racial Impact:
• Blacks are over 9 times more likely to be incarcerated than whites in CT; Hispanics are over 4 times more likely to be incarcerated than whites in CT – even greater than US averages.⁷

Broad Impact & Big Economic Implications:
• Between 70 and 100 millions Americans have a criminal record — as many as 1 in 3. Nearly half of all U.S. children have a parent with a criminal record.⁸
• One 2016 study estimates the collective national impact of these “shackles” reduces our GDP each year between $78 billion and $87 billion. Based on CT’s percentage of national GDP, this means the loss of between $1 billion and $1.2 billion in economic activity each year in Connecticut.⁹

Our Proposal -- Clean Slate Legislation:
• Clean Slate Legislation would automatically expunge the criminal records of returning citizens who do not return to crime - 3 years after misdemeanors and 5 years after non-violent felonies.
• Clean Slate legislation will give returning citizens hope and a promise that, if you remain crime free, your record will be expunged automatically.

For more information, contact your Core Team leader(s) or CONECT organizers: Matt McDermott (matt.mcd9@gmail.com) or Kristen Estabrook (kristen.estabrook@gmail.com).
Endnotes:

1 Statistics shared by Mike Lawlor, undersecretary for criminal justice for Gov. Malloy, during a Sept. 2018 meeting with CONECT leaders.


3 Ibid.


6 Center for Community Alternatives, “The Use of Criminal History Records in College Admissions Reconsidered.”


9 Cherrie Buckor and Alan Barber, Center for Economic and Policy Research, “The Price We Pay: Economic Costs of Barriers to Employment for Former Prisoners and People Convicted of Felonies,” 2016. CT estimate based on BEA statistics showing CT contributing 1.4% of national GDP in recent years.

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