



CONNECT
Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut
Congregaciones Organizadas para un Nuevo Connecticut

CLEAN SLATE FACT SHEET

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 CONNECT 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.

² National Employment Law Project, “Fair Chance Licensing Reform: Opening Pathways for People with Records to Join Licensed Professions,” Nov 2018, see: <https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/FairChanceLicensing-v3-2018.pdf>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Society for Human Resource Management, “Background Checking—The Use of Criminal Background Checks in Hiring Decisions” (2012), p. 2, available at <http://www.shrm.org/research/surveyfindings/articles/pages/criminalbackgroundcheck.aspx>.

⁵ David Thacher, “The Rise of Criminal Background Screening in Rental Housing,” *Law & Social Inquiry* (2008)

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

⁷ Ashley Nellis, PhD., The Sentencing Project, “The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons”, 2016

⁸ Rebecca Vallas and Sharon Dietrich, “One Strike and You’re Out: How We Can Remove Barriers to Economic Security and Mobility,” <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/report/2014/12/02/102308/one-strike-and-youre-out/>

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.