



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Clean Slate Act

A.1029A (Cruz)/S.211A (Myrie)

April 4, 2023

The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) strongly supports Clean Slate Act A.1029A (Cruz)/S.211A (Myrie) which would automatically clear a New Yorker's conviction record once they become eligible, ensuring that New Yorkers are not punished beyond their sentences and can be empowered participants in their communities.

As New York's primary care association for federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), also known as community health centers (CHCs), CHCANYS knows access to healthcare, social services, jobs, and housing is critical to living full and healthy lives. Located in low-income and medically underserved neighborhoods, CHCs provide a full range of primary and preventive health care and enabling services for more than 2.3 million patients at over 800 sites, regardless of insurance, immigration status, or ability to pay. Among CHC patients, 89% are low-income, 68% are Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and people of color, 13% are uninsured, and 59% are enrolled in Medicaid or Child Health Plus.

It is critical that the State ensures that all New Yorkers have access to resources and services they need to thrive, especially as the State is facing a workforce and housing crisis. Yet, there are 2.3M New Yorkers who are being perpetually punished by their conviction records that deprive them of access to basic opportunities like housing and jobs, despite having already served their sentences. The ACLU estimates that, nationally, excluding individuals with conviction histories from the workforce costs the economy between \$78-\$87B.¹

Although NYS enacted a law in 2017 that allowed for limited petition-based sealing of conviction records, only an estimated 600,000 New Yorkers were eligible and less than 1% made it through the process. This critical relief should be available and accessible to everyone, not just those who can afford a lawyer. The Clean Slate Act would clear a New Yorker's conviction record by automatically sealing misdemeanors (3 years from sentencing) and felonies (7 years from sentencing), not including sex offenses. A person is eligible for relief under the Clean Slate Act if they have completed their jail/prison time, completed their probation/parole, and have no subsequent NYS convictions.

Passing the Clean Slate Act will not only transform the lives of the 2.3M New Yorkers with conviction records who deserve a chance for a clean slate but also address the wrongs of racial injustice in the criminal justice system that has disproportionately impacted Black and Brown populations who are charged and convicted at higher rates relative to their share of New York's population.

CHCANYS urges the New York State Legislature to swiftly pass the Clean Slate Act A.1029A (Cruz)/S.211A (Myrie) to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to basic opportunities and can be active participants in their communities.

For more information, please reach out to Marie Mongeon, Vice President of Policy, at mmongeon@chcanys.org.

¹ American Civil Liberties Union. 2017. Back to Business: How Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Job Seekers Benefits Your Company. https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/060917-trone-reportweb_0.pdf