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Bipartisan Justice Reform Advocates Launch Clean Slate Campaign to Expand Second Chances in Delaware

WILMINGTON — The ACLU of Delaware, in partnership with the National Clean Slate Initiative, Delaware Coalition for Smart Justice, Delaware Center for Justice, Game Changers, and National Paper Prisons Initiative, launched a Clean Slate campaign in Delaware earlier today.

The Clean Slate Delaware campaign kicked off this morning with a virtual public event, joined by U.S. House Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester, Delaware State Senator Darius Brown, Rev. Dr. Silvester S. Beaman, Pastor Bethel AME Church, Wilmington, Delaware, justice reform advocates, community members, and business leaders, and moderated by Rebecca Vallas of Center for American Progress and founding partner of the National Clean Slate Initiative.

“[Over 400,000 people in Delaware](#) are saddled with arrest or criminal records that block their access to jobs, housing, education, starting a business, or participating fully in social and civic community life,” said David Bever, executive director of the Delaware Center for Justice. “In a state of less than 1 million people, that number represents a clear crisis for Delawareans who are trying to move ahead with their lives and participate fully in our state’s economy.”

The Clean Slate Delaware campaign aims to build on the National Clean Slate Initiative’s movement to automate the clearing of criminal records after a period of time, allowing people who have served their debt to society to move on with their lives by passing legislation that would implement automated record clearance statewide.

“What we’re seeing in Delaware is further indication of a growing nationwide movement that values the opportunity for every American to be able to make a living, take care of their families, and fully participate in their communities,” said Sheena Meade, Managing Director of the national Clean Slate Initiative. “At the center of this movement are the very people who have been directly harmed by a system of mass incarceration and perpetual punishment that sets us all back. And we are calling for fundamental change.”



Currently, most Delawareans with an arrest or criminal record face significant barriers to education, employment, housing, credit, and other opportunities to become productive, contributing members of society. This can lead to further arrests, convictions and returns to prison. No matter how minor the offense or how long ago it was, an employer, a landlord, or a college may have policies or regulatory requirements that exclude those with criminal records. Even in the absence of formal barriers, the stigma of a criminal record can be a lifelong barrier to opportunity.

The Clean Slate Delaware campaign partners believe that more Delawareans should be able to move beyond their paper prisons and receive a true second chance at economic success and inclusion in their communities — and they're in good company. Across the country, 70 percent of Americans support clean slate policies, including 66 percent of Republicans and 75 percent of Democrats.

“Clean Slate policies are popular with stakeholders and community members across both sides of the aisle,” said Mike Brickner, executive director of the ACLU of Delaware. “Automatic record sealing is supported by criminal justice reform experts, economic and civil rights activists, policy-makers on both sides of the aisle, justice-involved individuals, crime survivors, business owners, prosecutors and law enforcement leaders. Clean Slate is common-sense legislation that will boost our economy, communities, and justice system. Everyone stands to win with Clean Slate in Delaware.”

A recording of the Clean Slate Delaware campaign launch event can be found online here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Un1JbZLhIq0wYyyprnCY8Ml158oItvsXz/view?usp=sharing>

More information on the Clean Slate Delaware campaign, and this press release, can be found online here: <https://www.aclu-de.org/en/news/clean-slate-delaware>.

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