



Legislative Testimony
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Testimony in Support of HB 6948: An Act Concerning Collateral Consequences of Criminal Records on Housing

Thank you Representative Felipe, Senator Marx, ranking members Representative Scott and Senator Sampson, and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Abraham Santiago and I submit this testimony as a Smart Justice Leader with the ACLU of Connecticut in strong support of HB 6948. We support this bill because housing is a fundamental human right, and for too long, people with criminal records have been unjustly locked out of safe and stable housing.

I bring not just policy arguments but lived experience to this fight. I know what it means to come home after incarceration, ready to rebuild, only to find doors slammed in my face. After spending two decades in prison, I was released into a world that claimed to believe in second chances, yet every housing application became another trial, another judgment against my past regardless of the person I had become. I was fortunate. I had people who believed in me, resources that helped me stabilize. But for too many, those supports aren't there.

Denying housing based on criminal records is not about public safety. It is about exclusion. It is about keeping people in cycles of instability and poverty, ensuring that they never truly have a chance to move forward. Let's be clear: this practice disproportionately harms Black and Brown communities, communities already over-policed, over-incarcerated, and systematically denied economic opportunities.

Today, I am a clinical technician in the medical ICU at Yale New Haven Hospital. I am the Community Engagement and Advocacy Fellow at 4CT. I work for the University of Connecticut at the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy. I am a Rockwood Fellow for Leaders in Higher Education in Prison. I consult for several colleges and universities in this state and across the country. I am a working member of the New England Commission on the Future of Higher Education in Prison. By every measure, I have proven that people can transform, that second chances are real. But none of that erases the fight I had to endure just to find housing.

HB 6948 is not about handouts. It is about fairness. It ensures that people are judged for who they are today, not just for the worst moment of their past. It creates a fair process that prevents blanket discrimination while still allowing landlords to assess individual circumstances. This bill is about justice. It is about dignity. It is about ensuring that when people come home, they truly have a home to come back to.

The ACLU of Connecticut and I urge you to pass HB 6948 because no one should be sentenced to homelessness. The time for excuses is over. The time for action is now.

Thank you.