



## CITY OF NEW HAVEN

Office of Mayor Justin Elicker  
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### **Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 6531, An Act Concerning The Sealing of Eviction Records; Senate Bill 875, An Act Concerning The Risk of Homelessness For Those Released From The Custody of The Department of Corrections**

Senator Lopes, Representative McGee, Ranking Members Polletta and Cicarella, and distinguished members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Omena McCoy and I am a Policy Analyst for the City of New Haven. I am submitting today's testimony in support of H.B. 6528, An Act Concerning The Sealing of Eviction Records. The COVID-19 pandemic has helped to shed light on a vast number of social inequities affecting our most vulnerable, disenfranchised, and oppressed communities in the State of Connecticut; these groups specifically identifying as people of color.

Today, members will hear and read testimony from landlords across the state who suggest that taking away the ability for them to see a prospective tenants housing history threatens their business. It takes away their ability to weed out those who pose a threat to other tenants, and most importantly, those who can and cannot afford to make their monthly rental payments. They will tell you that the very premise of this bill and its consideration this session is unacceptable. Holding all of this together, I'd also like to highlight that the tenant screening process helps to perpetuate housing injustice and economic inequality, which predominately impacts low-income women of color. Black women are approximately twice as likely as their white counterparts to face an eviction.

This process permanently labels these tenants as bad actors, without giving them any recourse to explain the circumstances that contributed to the eviction or provide reasons for why they would be good tenants. The truth that a large volume of people tend not to acknowledge is that landlords seldom rent to people with a history of eviction or non-payment of rent. Furthermore, eviction filings lock tenants out of housing opportunities despite the possibility that a case would never result in a judgement against them. The time to end this type of housing discrimination is now, I urge members of the committee to support this bill.



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### **Senate Bill 875, An Act Concerning The Risk of Homelessness For Those Released From The Custody of The Department of Corrections**

Homelessness is an unacceptable condition for any Connecticut resident, and it is also an expensive public policy problem. Every year, nearly 1.2k people who utilize shelter have also been released from a Department of Correction facility within the last three years. While homelessness is a tragedy for anyone who experiences it, it brings additional challenges for people involved in the criminal justice system. For people released from DOC custody who are under parole or probation supervision, homelessness can decrease one's chances of complying with the terms of supervision, leading to technical violations and/or revocations of parole or probation and more time spent in prison. This legislation would screen all inmates for housing needs and homelessness risk as part of their Department of Corrections reentry plan, providing early identification of people who are likely to have challenges identifying a suitable home plan or sponsor. I urge members of the committee to support this bill.