

Date: January 27, 2026

To: Chair, Vice-Chair and Members, Economic Development Committee

From: Deshunai Barlowe

RE: Support HB 2747, HB 2047

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Deshunai Barlowe and I work in many sectors in my community. I'm here today, not just as an advocate, but as someone who works directly with individuals and families impacted by our criminal legal system. Through my work in community advocacy and expungement efforts, I've seen how a past record, often from years or even decades ago, continues to block access to employment, housing, and stability long after someone has done everything asked of them.

What I want you to understand is this: the barrier isn't accountability. People want to work, to provide for their families, to move forward. The barrier is a system that requires legal knowledge, time, and money just to access relief that the law already says they're eligible for. Many people simply give up, not because they don't qualify, but because the process feels impossible.

I've sat with impacted individuals who did everything right after their conviction; stayed out of trouble, completed programs, raised families, yet are still denied jobs or housing because of a record that no longer reflects who they are. That constant rejection wears people down. It sends the message that no amount of growth is enough.

Clean Slate matters because it removes discretion and guesswork from the process. It ensures that relief is based on eligibility and behavior, not on whether someone has an attorney or understands the system. From an advocacy standpoint, automating expungement is equity.

When people can work and secure housing, they are less likely to re-enter the system. Families stabilize. Communities become stronger. I've seen the difference even limited relief can make, and I've also seen how many people are left behind under the current model.

Clean Slate is not about erasing accountability. It's about honoring rehabilitation and allowing people to fully step into the lives they've worked hard to rebuild. Missouri is ready for this.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage the committee to support and vote yes on HB 2747 and HB 2047. Thank you for your time and consideration.