

“It’s an anti-discrimination bill that discriminates,” says NARSOL’s Connecticut advocate

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By [Kelan Lyons](#) . . . Rogsbert King was shaking as she held the letter in her hand. Ever since the Board of Pardons and Parole had provisionally approved her application a few months earlier, she’d checked the mail three times each day, desperate to know for sure her criminal record had been wiped away.

King was petrified to open the thin envelope, worried the state had found a reason to deny her pardon. She asked her fiancé to do it for her.

“I had tears in my eyes because I couldn’t believe it,” King said, describing the moment last October when she read the paper clearing her of the drug-fueled crimes that drove her to jail a half-dozen times and acted like a scarlet letter when

she applied for jobs.

King now works to help others unshackle themselves from criminal convictions that hold them back years after they complete their sentences. During the last legislative session she teamed up with Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut (CONNECT) to promote a “Clean Slate” bill that would have expunged people’s criminal records if they remained crime-free for up to five years after serving their sentences.

The measure failed, but there’s hope for this year, especially since the most politically powerful person in the state will be on their side – Gov. Ned Lamont.

Lamont’s administration is working on a legislative proposal for the upcoming session that would create a process to clear certain criminal records automatically. . . .

The bill supported by CONNECT last year would have automated much of the current system managed by the Board of Pardons and Parole. Lawmakers tweaked the proposal after a public hearing at which people expressed concerns about how certain violent crimes would be handled. McDermott said the revised bill barred those convicted of sexual and domestic violence crimes from the automatic pardon process.

“There might be some technical tweaks on how that carve-out gets done,” McDermott said of the 2020 bill, but “our proposal this year would not relitigate those. It would still carve those crimes out.”

People convicted of sex crimes generally do not reoffend. The Office of Policy and Management released two studies, one in 2012 and the other in 2017, that analyzed crimes committed by sex offenders released five years earlier. Those studies found that 3.6% of people convicted of a sex crime were arrested for another by 2011, and 4.1% were rearrested by 2016. Those numbers are similar to studies conducted in other states, like New York, California and Alaska.

“I see Clean Slate being an anti-discrimination bill that discriminates,” said Cindy Prizio, the executive director of One Standard of Justice, an organization that works to ensure people convicted or accused of sex offenses are treated fairly by the state before, during and after their sentences. “Rather than looking at people as individuals, we’re lumping all these people into the same pot.”

[Read the full piece here at the CT Mirror.](#)