



# MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

*Every physician matters, each patient counts.*

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF  
H.1693, AN ACT TO REMOVE COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES AND PROTECT THE  
PRESUMPTION OF INNOCENCE &  
H.1811, AN ACT REQUIRING CLEAN SLATE AUTOMATED RECORD SEALING  
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
SEPTEMBER 9, 2025**

**The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) wishes to be recorded in support of H.1693, *An Act to remove collateral consequences and protect the presumption of innocence*, and H.1811, *An Act requiring clean slate automated record sealing*.**

The MMS is a professional association of over 23,000 physicians and medical students and advocates on behalf of patients for a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them to provide the best care possible. The MMS acknowledges that social and structural determinants of health play a key role in health outcomes and health disparities, and that addressing the social and structural determinants of health for patients and communities is critical to the health of our patients, our communities, and a sustainable, effective health care system. Accordingly, we write in support of the “Clean Slate” legislative package — H.1693 and H.1811— which together would modernize our state’s approach to criminal record sealing and promote the health, well-being, and dignity of Massachusetts residents.

As physicians, we understand that health is shaped not only by clinical care, but by the conditions in which people live, work, and build their lives. Barriers to employment, housing, and education are among the most powerful social determinants of health.<sup>1</sup> Individuals burdened by old criminal records, often for offenses that were dismissed or never resulted in conviction, face lasting barriers that perpetuate cycles of poverty, instability, and stress. These conditions, in turn, have profound impacts on both individual and community health.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. *Social Determinants of Health*. Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health>

<sup>2</sup> Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts. *Healthy Aging with a Criminal Record in Hampden County, MA: A Health Impact Assessment About the Use of CORIs in Housing Decisions*. Springfield, MA; 2021. <https://www.publichealthwm.org/reports/HIA-CORI#:~:text=About%20the%20Project,in%20affordable%20housing%20decisions%20are:>

The *Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts* found that the use of criminal offender record information (CORI) in housing decisions contributes directly to housing insecurity, chronic stress, and poor health outcomes, especially for older adults.<sup>3</sup> Lack of stable housing and employment is strongly correlated with increased rates of chronic disease, substance use, and mental health challenges.<sup>4</sup> By impeding access to these social determinants, the persistence of old criminal records creates cumulative health harm that extends well beyond the justice system. Moreover, research shows that individuals with criminal histories—regardless of conviction status—experience discrimination in health care settings and are more likely to delay or forgo needed care due to stigma and mistrust.<sup>5</sup> The result is a cycle of untreated illness, economic marginalization, and diminished life expectancy.

The burden of criminal records is not evenly distributed. Due to longstanding inequities in policing and sentencing, Black and Latino residents in Massachusetts are disproportionately affected by CORI-related barriers. These inequities contribute directly to racial and ethnic disparities in employment, housing stability, and health outcomes. Automated record sealing would help dismantle these structural inequities and advance both racial and health justice. The economic consequences of a lingering criminal record are well-documented. A 2020 University of Michigan study found that individuals whose records were cleared saw their wages increase by more than 20% within a year, while experiencing extremely low recidivism rates.<sup>6</sup> Economic stability is one of the strongest predictors of health. When individuals gain access to steady employment and safe housing, communities benefit through reduced poverty, lower health care costs, and improved overall well-being.

Clean Slate policies have been implemented in multiple states, including Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Michigan, with strong bipartisan support and significant public health benefit. These bills will ensure equitable access to relief, reduce court burdens, and help more than 670,000 eligible Massachusetts residents move forward without the administrative and financial obstacles of a petition-based process.

For these reasons, we request a favorable release of H.1693 and H.1811. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly LM, Hindmarch GM, Watkins KE, et al. *Association between housing status and mental health and substance use severity among individuals with opioid use disorder and co-occurring depression and/or PTSD*. *BMC Primary Care*. 2025;26:250. doi:10.1186/s12875-025-02947-2.

<sup>5</sup> Frank JW, Wang EA, Nunez-Smith M, et al. *Discrimination Based on Criminal Record and Healthcare Utilization Among Men Recently Released from Prison: A Descriptive Study*. *Health & Justice*. 2014;2:6. doi:10.1186/2194-7899-2-6.

<sup>6</sup> Prescott JJ, Starr SB. *Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study*. *Harvard Law Review*. 2020;133:2460–2552.