

My name is Russell Zucconi, I am a graduate of the Healthier Colorado Clean Slate Leadership Academy, and I live in Highlands Ranch. I am in support of HB24-1133.

There seems to be an unbreakable connection between homelessness, substance use, the criminal justice system, and poverty. The four experiences together, unfortunately, can be a cycle that is nearly impossible to pull yourself out of. Thankfully, I've worked hard and have achieved what most are not supported to do, against all of the odds.

The criminal justice system is the one issue, however, that is almost impossible to overcome. Homelessness, substance use, and poverty are all experiences that I've fought my way out of. And I am proud of that. My criminal records and my contact with the system is the one problem that continues to hold me back. You would think it should be the other way around.

The original clean slate bill that passed in 2022 and this one before you today is one way we can begin to reverse the devastating impacts and lifelong punishments of Colorado's criminal justice system.

A petition-based process does currently exist. It's complicated, imperfect, and extremely difficult to navigate - not to mention costly for people who can't find work that is more than minimum wage.

Even the experts are not prepared to support the few people, like me, who even know that our records can be sealed. I cycled through many lawyers before I found one at Expunge Colorado who actually understood the record-sealing process and knew the best path for me to take. All of the previous lawyers provided different answers to my questions, and many of them did not know the process.

That is why automated record sealing is the ultimate way we can give people who've earned their way a second chance. You may recall, but Clean Slate didn't change the timeframes or stipulations on when and what can be sealed. In fact, it made a little harder by extending the timeframes - something that I hope we can tackle in future years.

But what it does do is create a clear path for deserving people to have their records sealed. It removes the bureaucratic hardships and red tape that keep people from working, finding a place to live, and contributing to their communities. When we can support ourselves and our families, Colorado is safer and stronger.

I fought my way out of homelessness. I fought my way out of addiction. And now I've built a life I cherish with my fiancé. It doesn't seem right that the one thing holding me back after all I've been able to conquer is the Government.

Please vote yes on HB24-1133 and help us implement the Colorado Clean Slate Act in a way that is just and gets the government out of the way of letting people like me succeed.

Thank you, please vote yes on HB24-1133.