

Commentary

Clean Slate is Good for New York's Businesses

by Paul Zuber & [Catalina Cruz](#)

April 26, 2023

Across New York, many employers continue to struggle to find workers.

The labor market remains tight, even amid fears about a looming recession. According to a recently released study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, there are over 450,000 open jobs in New York State with only about 400,000 unemployed New Yorkers. This workforce shortage has a devastating impact on the New York economy as it drives up costs, makes it difficult for businesses to expand, and becomes a disincentive for businesses to relocate to New York.

Yet there is a way for our State Legislature to help employers bring workers back into the economy, while also making our communities safer. Indeed, this is exactly what the Clean Slate Act would do (S1553-Myrie/A6399-Cruz).

It's state legislation that will seal old conviction records and enable more than 2.3 million New Yorkers to obtain jobs. This crucial bill will help businesses across New York hire employees, boost our state's economic growth, and increase public safety.

The Clean Slate Act has growing support across the state, including from Fortune 500 companies, business groups, labor unions, and local and county legislatures.

After old conviction records are sealed, individuals are more likely to obtain jobs, stay employed, support their families, and strengthen their communities. Those are positive outcomes that will benefit every town, city, and county in New York.

According to a recent analysis, the Clean Slate Act would generate an estimated annual earnings boost to New York State of \$7.1 billion.

The Clean Slate Act would automatically seal old conviction records for New Yorkers who have successfully completed their sentence, are no longer on community supervision, and have not incurred any new charges or convictions after three years for misdemeanors and seven years for felonies. We have to ask ourselves, what is enough? When people have paid their debt, when can they move forward?

These New Yorkers want to work and contribute to our economy, but are currently held back in doing so because of their old convictions. By decreasing barriers to jobs, housing, and education, the Clean Slate Act will make it easier for these New Yorkers to support themselves and their families.

Research shows that, after old conviction records are sealed, individuals are more likely to maintain employment and increase their earnings, and less likely than members of the general public to be convicted of a crime.

Let's be clear on what this means: sealing old conviction records helps reduce crime and increase public safety because it enables more job-seekers to enter the workforce and remain employed, rather than re-engage in criminal activity.

New Yorkers of all backgrounds should welcome the Clean Slate Act. There are limits to the sealing provided in the legislation. Records remain accessible for a number of purposes, including work in certain regulated fields, as well as to law enforcement and the courts. In carefully crafting the bill, the Legislature has considered a wide array of interests, including businesses, which has contributed to the support from so many business leaders, like JPMorgan Chase. The result is a strong bill that will benefit directly-impacted people, their families and communities, as well as employers and New York State as a whole.

Clean slate bills are proven to work. Consider a recent study on Michigan's clean slate law: it found that, within two years of Michigan clearing old conviction records, residents of that state were 11% more likely to have a job and were earning 25% more in income.

Across the country, clean slate bills have earned bipartisan support and passed in red and blue states including Utah, Connecticut, California, and Michigan. Even Texas, Missouri, and West Virginia are actively considering them now as well.

Nationally, excluding individuals with old conviction records from the workforce costs the economy as much as \$87 billion annually in lost GDP — a devastating loss for businesses, workers, families, and communities.

Here in New York, clean slate can't wait. Our message to Governor Hochul and the legislative leaders is: let's get it done.

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