

April 6, 2017

Senator Corey Booker
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Rand Paul
124 Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators Booker and Paul:

We are writing to applaud your leadership in helping to clear the path to employment for young people and adults with a criminal record and to express our strong support for the Record Expungement Designed to Enhance Employment Act of 2017 (REDEEM Act).

Our organization, the National Employment Law Project, advocates on issues affecting low-wage and unemployed workers and seeks to reduce unfair and unnecessary barriers to employment of people with records. The REDEEM Act responds to a growing crisis of opportunity that plagues as many as 70 million people in the United States who have a criminal record that can show up on a routine criminal background check. It does so by seizing on the momentum across the states to embrace proven “clean slate” strategies that level the playing field for qualified workers to compete for gainful employment.

As documented by a Vera Institute for Justice report, in the past five years nearly half the states have expanded their sealing and expungement laws to help remove the debilitating stigma of a criminal record for those seeking employment, housing, education and other vital opportunities to rebuild their lives and give back to their communities. In contrast, federal law still fails to provide a meaningful process for young people or adults to seek similar remedies to clear their record, even for juvenile and non-violent offenses that may have taken place in the distant past. Thus, the REDEEM Act fills a conspicuous void in federal law and significantly rewards those who have worked hard to rebuild their lives rather than further penalizing them.

In addition, the REDEEM Act corrects a major flaw in the FBI’s criminal background checks for employment. The FBI generated 17 million background checks in 2012 for employment and licensing purposes – a six-fold increase in less than 10 years. But roughly half the records were inaccurate, largely because arrest information is never updated to reflect dismissed charges and other critical developments in the case. As documented in NELP’s [analysis](#), about half the states failed to include complete disposition information in at least 25 percent of their cases, and 10 states did not have updated information in 50 percent or more of their cases. The REDEEM Act, if enacted, would require that any missing records are tracked down and corrected using the same procedures that have been successfully tailored to resolve errors that show up under the Brady gun-check program. These simple yet effective procedures can make all the difference in the lives of thousands of workers who, for no

reason other than faulty FBI record, are locked out of the labor market.

Accordingly, we applaud your leadership and urge immediate passage of the REDEEM Act to restore hope and opportunity to all those who struggle against significant odds to find work with a criminal record.

Sincerely,

Christine Owens
Executive Director