New Hope Act

Promote fairness, opportunity, and safety by supporting HB 1041

We believe that everyone deserves a second chance. After a person pays their debt to society, they should have the opportunity to rebuild their life.

However, it is hard for people to successfully re-enter society and become contributing members of their community. Long after a person has completed their sentence, their criminal convictions can continue to punish them, denying them opportunities for housing, employment, education, and even volunteering at the child's school. The effects of incarceration are far reaching, negatively impacting families, communities, and the economy.

The New Hope Act will help change this.

Washington state has long allowed people with criminal convictions who have gone years without offending to "vacate" their charges, effectively erasing them from their record. The New Hope Act (HB 1041) takes several important steps to reduce barriers and help people re-enter by:

- Improving the procedure for certifying sentence completion (i.e. obtaining a Certificate of Discharge);
- Promoting fairness by allowing multiple misdemeanors to be vacated, just as multiple felonies can be vacated;
- Allowing additional felony offenses to be vacated, within the discretion of the court, when rehabilitation has been demonstrated by a length period without any new offense.*

I am the mom of an 11 year old son and a student of Evergreen State College in Olympia, pursuing a Master’s in Public Administration.

Seven years ago, I went to prison for drug-related charges. While inside, I worked hard to improve myself and was released early on good behavior.

After my release from prison, my son and I moved to Olympia. I enrolled in school and found a job and housing. While my son and I are doing okay, I still worry about how the criminal charges on my record might impact our futures. So many routine things in life require a background check. If I ever wanted to find a new apartment or a new job, I could easily be denied because of my history.

Right now, my background is holding me back from volunteering at my son’s school. My son is autistic, and it would mean a world of difference for both of us if I were allowed to spend a few hours at his school with him each week.

If I could get my criminal charges vacated, I would have more peace of mind about housing and employment opportunities, and I would be able to play a more active role in my son’s education. If the New Hope Act was passed, I could continue to focus on my future without worrying about my past.

-Carolina L., Olympia

People who have proven they can be law abiding members of society deserve a chance to start over. Help us create a more just and vibrant Washington by supporting HB 1041.

* Felony convictions cannot be vacated if the offense was a violent offense, a crime against other persons, or a felony DUI. The New Hope Act amends this to allow a person to apply to vacate Assault in the second degree and Assault in the third degree when not committed against a law enforcement officer or peace officer, or Robbery in the second degree, so long as those offenses do not include a firearm, deadly weapon, or sexual motivation enhancement.
We believe in the importance of investing in families and communities. Help us make HB 1041 a reality.