



**Rabbi Moti Rieber, Executive Director**  
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Written Testimony of in support of HB 2575  
Committee on Judiciary, Rep. Fred Patton, chair  
February 7, 2022

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,

My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber; I serve as executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multifait issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding a number of critical social and economic justice issues. KIFA is the state advocacy office of the Central States Synod of the ELCA; and has partnerships with the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the UCC; the Justice and Mercy Team of the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church; the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas; and the Federation of Unitarian Universalist Fellowships of Kansas -- I am testifying on their behalf as well. I am writing to express KIFA’s support of HB 2575, the “Clean Slate Act.”

This bill is at the nexus of a couple of issues that are core to KIFA’s mission: first, reforming the criminal justice system to make it easier for people to successfully re-enter and reintegrate into society after punishment for a crime; and second, our overall interest in economic justice, meaning the ability of people, particularly poor people and people of color, to have what they need to survive and thrive, to support themselves and their families and to put food on the table. We believe that the Clean Slate Act addresses both of these concerns.

HB 2575 allows for the automatic expungement of the criminal records of people who are eligible for expungement but lack the resources to go through the current petition-based process. Manual expungements cost money and time, and people often have to hire attorneys to do the work. This complicated process means that only a small percentage of those eligible for expungement actually receive it. For everyone else, the crime remains on the record, interfering – possible for the rest of their lives – with their ability to rent a house, get a job, or further their education.

It’s also important to state that people of color are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, with much greater rates of arrest and conviction than white people, despite not committing crimes or using drugs at greater rates. By removing the barrier of petition-based expungement, Clean Slate will help to improve economic opportunities and health equity for some of our most marginalized people.

There is no societal benefit to keeping people tethered to the mistakes of their past. As people of faith, we strongly believe in the redemptive power of forgiveness, and in the ability of people to remake their lives for the better. Continuing to rely on manual expungement makes this important step out of reach for too many people of limited means and ability to navigate the system. Automatic expungement does not negatively impact rates of recidivism, but it does help people get and keep jobs and housing.<sup>1</sup>

For all these reasons, KIFA supports HB 2575, and I encourage you to recommend it favorably to the full House for passage. Thank you for your attention.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/opinion/expunge-criminal-records.html>