

- Good evening. Clean Slate Policies: Clearing the Way for Real Second Chances. My name is Nicholas Reed. I am the deputy director of the National Reentry Resource Center, and the director of the Clean Slate Clearinghouse. The Clean Slate Clearinghouse is funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and is designed as a one-stop-shop to provide people with criminal records, legal service providers, state policy makers, and those generally interested in working to overcome the challenges of a criminal record with information on juvenile and adult criminal record clearance policies in the United States. The Clearinghouse also offers news, tools and other resources focused on Clean Slate and related criminal records clearance efforts around the country. The Clean Slate Clearinghouse is actively rebuilding our national network in support of the dissemination of information and resources for Clean Slate. And today's panel provides no greater representation of the power of that network. If you'll indulge me for a few minutes, I will humbly and quickly introduce our panelists and the organizations that they're representing today. First, the Clean Slate Initiative is a national bipartisan coalition, advancing policies to automatically clear all of eligible criminal records across the United States. Built on the belief that a criminal record should not be of life sentence to poverty, the Clean Slate Initiative works to ensure that people who have served their time receive a fair shot at a better future. Clean Slate Initiative is working to better achieve equality especially across race and income by transforming the justice system to remove unnecessary barriers to employment, education, and housing. Joining us from the Clean Slate Initiative are Sheena Meade. Sheena Meade is the current and first managing director of the Clean Slate Initiative. A seasoned organizer, campaigner and advocate, Sheena's calling is to transform pain into power. As a mother and an activist, she knows firsthand that the community's most impacted by injustice are closest to the solutions. This truth has been a driving force behind her career in organizing philanthropy and nonprofits. Prior to joining the Clean Slate Initiative, Sheena helped restore voting rights to 1.4 million people experiencing felony disenfranchisement as the director of strategic partnerships for the bipartisan Florida Rights Restoration Coalition and as a senior advisor to the Second Chances Florida campaign. Alongside Sheena, we have Erin George. Erin is a national campaigns manager with the Clean Slate Initiative, where she directs statewide grassroots Clean Slate legislative and policy campaigns across country, working from Texas to New York, Michigan to Utah, Colorado to Oklahoma, and beyond. At the Clean Slate Initiative, Erin works hand-in-hand with partners, including directly impacted grassroots organizations, economic policy groups, businesses, faith leaders, legal experts, and many, many others. Sheena and Erin, thank you both for joining us today. Next. One of Clean Slate Initiative's state partners is Clean Slate Utah, a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to helping Utah's clear their criminal records and access opportunity. In support of that mission, the team at Clean Slate Utah works tirelessly to spread the word about Utah's Clean Slate law, the most recent to be enacted in

the country, by the way, to individuals with records that they're aware of the law and its positive impact on their lives. The team also provides links to free and low-cost legal resources to assist individuals who need to go through the petition-based expungement process, raises money to help cover the costs of government fees associated with legal expungement, and elevates the voices and stories of directly impacted people and their families. Joining us is Noella Sudbury, Clean Slates' first and current executive director. Lawyer by training, Noella graduated from law school in 2009 from the University of Utah. She started her legal career as a public defender and later transitioned into policy work before serving as the executive director at Clean Slate Utah. Noella is also the recent founder of Rasa, a legal tech company on a justice mission to make it simple and affordable for people to clear criminal records, which I'm hoping she'll tell us a little bit more about today. Thank you Noella, for being here. We appreciate it. Next. We have the Fully Free Campaign, the first of its kind in the nation. The Fully Free Campaign is bringing together diverse people from across Illinois to push for bold policy change, to eliminate permanent punishments, and provide hope and opportunity to people with criminal records. The campaign is centering the experience of people who have been directly impacted by the criminal legal system and supporting their leadership. They're working with strong, diverse coalition of advocates, pursuing a multi-year advocacy campaign, strategy to eliminate permanent punishments, and grounding its strategy and communication in an original, person-centered research to help change the narrative about people with records and to educate people about the need to end permanent punishments. Joining us from Fully Free is Marlon Chamberlain, the director of the campaign. Marlon is an advocate for people directly impacted by the criminal legal system. With over 20 years of lived experience, professional experience through his work at the Heartland Alliance, the leadership organization behind Fully Free. Marlon has an established track record of creating effective coalitions, having previously served as the Inglewood project manager with READI Chicago program at Heartland Alliance, and as a community organizer with the FORCE, or, Fighting to Overcome Records and Create Equality initiative. Marlon developed FORCE to become one of the strongest organizations led by people with records to advance issues, policies and legislation at the state level in Illinois, including passing the largest sealing expansion law in the United States, and leading a voter registration campaign that registered over a thousand people with records to vote. Marlon, thank you so much for being here, we're very glad to have you on board. Last but not least certainly is In2action. In2action is dedicated to a mission of providing transition and recovery support services to people recently released from prison and those at risk of incarceration. Based in Columbia, Missouri, In2action believes everyone deserves another chance and centers its work around providing the supports and resources required for success, giving hope to the hopeless. They provide safe and drug-free housing and supplying basic needs. They provide counseling groups, case

management referrals. They introduce people to an entire community of healthy people to help individuals establish and achieve their goals, and achieving some of the best outcomes in the state. With us today from In2action is Dan Hanneken, a licensed clinical social worker and a 2018 graduate from the University of Missouri with a master's in social work. Dan founded, and currently serves, as the executive director at In2action. I hope he doesn't mind me sharing this, but according to Dan, immediately after his third release from prison, he thought to himself, "There's no way I can ever stay out." He remembers telling himself that if he did manage to stay out, he would someday like to start a program so people like him might have a chance. About 10 years later, In2action was created. And today Dan teaches criminal justice courses at Missouri University in the School of Social Work, and is an experience presenter and published author on the issue of reentry. Dan is happily married to Stephanie, who is also his biggest fan. And in his spare time, I can't believe that he actually has any, but Dan is an avid distance runner and loves to spend time with his wife. Thank you all for bearing with me as I tell a small snippet of who you are and what you bring to the table today. It's such an inspiring and quite prolific panel today, and I want to get things kicked off. Taking a big picture look at what living with a criminal record is like in this country. So, Sheena and Erin, if I could kick things over to you. The work that you're doing at Clean Slate Initiative puts you at the forefront of working with and for individuals with a criminal record and working towards that clearing process. So if you don't mind just letting us know, what are some of the biggest impacts a criminal record has for individuals in the United States?

- Nick, I just wanna thank you for having this timely conversation, a must needed conversation, and inviting us to speak. And so, I'll start us off. 70 million Americans, an estimated one in three Americans have some type of arrest or conviction on the record. And actually, I'm one of those people in that number. And as a result, many face hundreds of lifelong barriers to opportunity, independence, financial security, from renting or even buying a home, securing employment, accessing education, starting a business, even opening a bank account, and even participating in a children's educational wellbeing. And it shouldn't be that way, right? And the issue is that most states allow people to petition, to have petition of court to have certain records clear. But unfortunately, the vast majority of people who are eligible, including those who are exonerated, don't access this right because it's costly, it's hard to access legal representation. And the biggest problem we're seeing is that people don't even know that their relief is even accessible or eligible. They don't know that they're eligible. And so, there's urgency right now in this moment to change that, and that's what the Clean Slate Initiative is doing. We're a national bipartisan organization that work with state partners to advance legislation, to change the laws, to expand who's eligible and also automate the process so people can move forward and remove barriers and create

opportunities for folks. And so that's what we're working on right now at the Clean Slate Initiative. And Erin, I'm not sure if there's anything that I might have missed that you may wanna add. Oh, let me just add some stats real quick, I'm sorry. So, just for folks to understand how many people actually use a background check, 9 in 10 employers, 4 of 5 landlords, and 3 out 5 colleges uses background checks. And so, no matter if something happens, low-level crime happened 10 or 15 years ago, it can actually pop up on your record and be a barrier to you accessing education, housing, or employment.

- Sheena did a beautiful job, as per usual. I'm super grateful to be here today, super grateful to be a part of this work. I am also impacted by way of family members, so I've seen, firsthand, the ways that records follow people and can create enormous barriers to their wellbeing. I think the only thing I'd add is that whether someone is impacted firsthand, impacted through the experience of a family member, really all of us are impacted. By denying people access to employment, to housing, to healthcare, et cetera, because of our record, that impacts all of us. And as we're in a moment where we're trying to recover from a global pandemic, we're in a moment where there is significant workforce gaps. By denying people record clearance or making access to record clearance challenging, what we're also doing is denying our economic development and we're denying employers of a strong, dedicated, skilled workforce.

- Great. Thank you both for setting the stage there. I want to invite our other panelists here as well to share their experiences and what things look like on the ground in Utah and Illinois and in Missouri. Noella, you wanna get us kicked off there?

- Sure. Honored to be here today. Thank you so much for the invitation. In Utah, our Clean Slate journey. So Utah passed its Clean Slate law unanimously back in 2019, but our journey there really started with workforce. And I appreciate Sheena and Erin's comments about the barriers of having a criminal record. There are so many, but in Utah, our journey started with work. Utah has one of the best economies in the nation. And I received a phone call when I was working as a policy advisor for the Salt Lake County mayor, from the Department of Workforce Services, saying, "Noella, we have all of these metro centers all across Utah where we're trying to help people get jobs. And what I see is skilled, capable, amazing people who wanna get back into the workforce, but all the employer sees is the criminal record. And it's sad, and we need to do something to tackle this together." Well, as Sheena mentioned, there is an expungement process in Utah and in most states, but unfortunately, that process is so costly and complicated that most people aren't able to navigate it on their own. And unfortunately, most people cannot pay what it costs to hire a lawyer to help them. And so, as a result, over 90% of people who are eligible to clear their record have not made it through the process. So that was really kind of our journey and starting point in

Utah, and how we got down this path. We ended up trying to tackle this problem at first through clinics, through expungement day events. I think everybody was so overwhelmed by the need out there. And quickly, we realized that, while clinics are very helpful and are very important, they're not a scalable solution to this issue. I remember the first clinic we put on all-day event, able to serve 200 people. We felt great about it. I then went back to my office and learned that over 800,000 Utahns have criminal records. And that is how I got down the path of looking for more scalable solutions, learned about Clean Slate. At the time, Pennsylvania was the first state in the nation to have a law like this. And I said, "We've gotta do this in Utah." So, more later, but that's kind of how we ended up down this path, and why automated clearing policies are so important.

- Perfect. Yes. A great preview of talking through some of the mechanisms people can use. Marlon, I wanna turn things to you, and see what, from your opinion, are some of the biggest challenges you've seen in Illinois regarding individual with criminal records.

- Yeah, absolutely. Good afternoon, everyone. What we see here in Illinois, I'll just start with some data, is that we have an estimated 3.3 million people living with an arrest or conviction record in Illinois. African Americans make up 13.8% of that population, but we make up 45% of individuals living with arrest and conviction records. There are hundreds of barriers that individuals face, or policy that creates permanent punishments for individuals. And these are sort of like the communities where black and brown folks live where the majority of folks return to after incarceration. And so, what we're hoping to do here is to eliminate as many permanent punishments as we can, but then also, the Clean Slate coalition and campaign here is working to hopefully create a process to where people can have their records expunged for statutes that we can't eliminate. But one of the core principles of the Fully Free campaign is really around, no one should have to live with the criminal record or an arrest record for the rest of their life. And so, what we wanna create is pathways to freedom, where a person, no matter the conviction, can be on a pathway to where they can earn their freedom and be able to move forward in life.

- Certainly, certainly. Yeah, much more to unpack there. Dan, wanna round out with you, and just have you share some of your thoughts and experiences around individual with criminal records.

- Absolutely. My name's Dan Hanneken, and I have a criminal record myself. I work in the field here in Missouri. We're very early in the process about Clean Slate Initiative. It's exciting to know that there's a national effort that we can follow the examples of some of the people that have spoke before me. So, as I've gone down this road, I've noticed some fragmented efforts around the state, including with the legislature, to move forward with the automated expungement

process in this state. So we've been working on just coming together and then learning from some of the states that went before us. But a couple things that I would like to mention, in Missouri, for sure, the greatest predictor for success, if you measure success by reoffending or recidivism, the greatest indicator for success among people that have criminal records is full-time employment. And yet, having a criminal record is one of the biggest obstacles to gaining that full-time employment. And I appreciated some of the data that Sheena shared because housing and education are also tremendous predictors for success. So again, there's a lot of obstacles for people with a history to obtain a formal college education or to acquire stable housing. One of the things that we're interested in Missouri is being very responsible with the expungement process and creating a path for any offender who has any type of history to be able to have second chances. We're looking to increase our workforce development as what was already mentioned. We have employers who are begging for help right now, but they have these blanket bands where anybody with any type of record is not eligible for employment. So we're early in the process, but we're excited to be on board.

- Great. Thank you, Dan. I wanna pause here briefly and just to iterate something that should have been said earlier. This session is being recorded for archiving purposes. So, hopefully everybody on-board realizes that, but I just wanna point that out, it was in a slide that I neglected to go over earlier in my excitement. So with that pause, we've started to talk about things like expungements and other mechanisms for record clearance. I wanna take a step back and, Sheena and Erin, come back to you and just give a little bit of background on what are the different mechanisms we're talking about here, what individuals can do if they have a criminal record and the ways that they can work to "clear that record." I know it varies dramatically around the state, and you all are working across all those different mechanisms. So, if you wouldn't mind just giving us a little bit of background information there.

- Yeah, I'm happy to jump in here. So, as Sheena and Noella both mentioned, the vast majority of states currently have laws on the books that allow for expungement, sealing or other types of record clearing. In some states, executive pardon does result in a record sealing, in many others, it does not. Nick, as you just mentioned, there's a lot of variation in the types of record clearance that's on the book state to state. And there's actually no system for record clearance at the federal level, which is something that we are working to change. As, again, has been mentioned, most states currently use a petition-based process. So that means someone has to figure out if they've become eligible, that information is not broadly available or accessible, folks have to go look for it and figure it out. And we all know that it can be complicated to understand statutes that are on the book. They then have to file a petition. That often requires payment to get a copy of the existing record from either a court repository or

law enforcement repository. They then have to file a petition. That often also requires a payment and a filing fee. That petition once filed is frequently reviewed, needs to be reviewed by a district attorney, and then reviewed by a judge, who makes a final determination. So obviously, it's a process that's lengthy, it's complex, it's costly. And that means that, oftentimes, it's people that have means who are able to access and avail themselves of the processes on the books. And people without those means, whether that's funds or access to an attorney, don't receive the relief that, statutorily on the books, they should be. In broad terms, a clear record is removed from public view. So it means it's not gonna come up in a background check, isn't available to employers, unless there's federal or state law that requires the background check for a specific area of work. For example, childcare, certain health professions, et cetera. And definitions of record clearance vary state-to-state as well. So in some states, a cleared record may also create some limit on law enforcement's ability to access record without action from the court. Research from the University of Michigan found that, in a petition-based system, where the decision-making is discretionary, just 6 1/2% of eligible people successfully get their records cleared. One of our partners at the Paper Prisons project is doing research at the state level, which shows that in many states' percentage is even lower. So, the work of Clean Slate and Clean Slate policies is to streamline that process. So replacing the petition-based record clearing process with an automated system that uses data, uses software to identify eligible records, and then automatically clear them once a person has met eligibility criteria. That often looks like there are waiting periods without an intervening reconviction. And so, what's really important is that through automation, we're providing the opportunity to clear records at scale and bring relief to everyone who's eligible without them having the burden of filing and processing individual petitions. And so, it creates greater equity, it is actually a cost saving measure for the local and state governments, and I think really puts us on the pathway to meaningful second chances, which is something that we all can get behind. So I will hand to Sheena, if I've missed anything there.

- You know that, Erin.

- Doing a lot of talking about Clean Slate right now in the state legislatures.

- Absolutely. Well, I will circle back to Noella here in a second, but I wanna check in with Marlon and Dan if there's anything to add on the complexities that we've mentioned, anything you've experienced or that you're working on as well. My takeaway from all of that is that Clean Slate is not quick or easy, or that clearing a record rather is not quick and easy. So I just wanna see if either of you had anything to add there to what Erin shared.

- I'll weigh in for Missouri, and not with any solutions, just problems. The expungement world in Missouri is much more of a fantasy than a reality for people with records. It just does not happen for a lot of the reasons that were previously stated. We plan to approach this very incrementally because not only is expungement fantasy talk for the people that we work with, there's a very limited number of offenses, just the most minor offenses that are even eligible for expungement, even though they're still criminal in the state of Missouri, and they still create a lot of obstacles. So, again, no solutions here, just more problems.

- We'll definitely talk about some of the solutions you're working on. I'm sorry, Marlon, to jump in right on top of you there, but yeah, go ahead.

- No, I'm sorry. I would just echo what Daniel shared. Same here, there's a limited amount of convictions that can actually be expunged. And then there's a backlog. In Illinois, we don't have a uniformed court system. And so, it's almost like if you have different convictions in different counties, you have to go to each county to file a report to have your record expunged. So, it's complicated. So I would just share and echo some of what Dan just shared.

- Yeah, I appreciate that. Well, Noella, you started to share some of what Clean Slate Utah started at and worked through. If you wouldn't mind continuing that story and just share the journey that really Clean Slate Utah has been on, and then what has resulted in the new Clean Slate law in Utah?

- Sure. Happy to. So, as I mentioned, we first tried to tackle this problem through clinics, and in particular, planned or one-day event back in 2018, where the idea was, "Let's get everybody into the same room, the public defenders, the prosecutors, the courts, community partners, people with records. We have this long, complicated, burdensome process. Can we brainstorm some solutions together?" And so the first kind of big event that we planned was called Expungement Day, and it was an effort to streamline what others have described as a complicated, costly process into one day. And so, it was very ambitious. It was a great event. We advertised in the paper, people drove from all across the state to attend, and hundreds and hundreds of people came. And I think, for policy makers, just seeing that, seeing the need, seeing the diversity of people, all ages, all backgrounds, criminal records, truly do touch everyone. If you think about one in three Americans, one in three Utahns, no one's exempt from it. So, to be able to see that there was so much momentum coming out of that event to do more. And so in doing some Google searching about innovative expungement policies that I found out about, Pennsylvania's Clean Slate law and Sharon Dietrich, who worked for Philadelphia legal services, was a huge mentor to me, connected me with the bill sponsor, and really gave me great advice for how to get



a Clean Slate campaign going in Utah. That required learning quite a bit about government agencies and how records are stored. Some people have talked about centralized versus decentralized records. So, in general, there's two agencies that, in every state, have access to criminal records. There's the state police or the Department of Public Safety, and then there's the courts. Some courts are centralized, some are decentralized. In Utah, we have a centralized court process. And under Utah law, individuals can get both misdemeanor and felony records expunged. And so, the question for lawmakers in Utah was, "Okay. You can get misdemeanors and felonies off your record, but most people don't, because the process is terrible. But Utah agencies have all of the information that they need to determine who's eligible. And so, might lawmakers get comfortable that if a person has remained crime-free, done everything the court has asked them to do, that rather put that burden on the individual to try to navigate this truncated, complicated, costly process, we have all the records, could we query those records to determine who's eligible and come up with a list of offenses where maybe we don't require that process? Maybe if somebody's done everything they have been asked to do by the court, that we just identify them as eligible, and clear their records for them. They don't need to petition a court, get on a list, hire an attorney, just the record will drop off." And luckily, lawmakers in Utah said yes. So Utah's Clean Slate law is an automatic expungement law. What that means is, because our courts are centralized, we query the court's database to determine who is eligible. Once those records are identified as eligible, there's an automated judicial order that is generated, sent over to the Department of Public Safety so that those offenses can be cleared from a person's Utah criminal history and FBI record. Our Clean Slate laws is subset of what's eligible. So, as I mentioned in Utah, you can get both misdemeanors and felonies off your record. Automatic clearance only applies to certain misdemeanor offenses. So in Utah, it's misdemeanor, any drug-related offenses, most B's and C's, and infractions. So if anybody has any of those qualifying offenses, and remains crime free for between five to seven years, depending on the severity of the offense, the government will identify their eligibility for Clean Slate and clear their record for them. They will partially clear someone who has both misdemeanor and felony records. So even though those felonies will still have to go through the petition-based process, hopefully that person overall has a much smaller record to deal with, and it makes it easier for them to get their full record over the finish line. So that's kind of what Utah's Clean Slate law is, and what offenses it applies to.

- Gotcha. What a success to have come by. I know it took a lot of work to get to this point. And you mentioned the fact of enactment. I know there are many states around the country that are working on and have Clean Slate laws that, are on paper, but haven't yet been enacted. So we'll touch on that here in a bit. But I wanna see, Marlon coming to you, talk a little bit more about Fully Free. I know you mentioned the difficulties in Illinois around criminal records, but some of the work

that you're working on with Fully Free and trying to overcome some of these challenges, if not fully automate Clean Slate laws at this point.

- Yeah. So, as I stated before, the challenges has really been just the hundreds of laws that continue to create this prison after the prison for individuals who have completed all of the stipulations of probation or parole, or just being released from prison. What we're doing here is just continuing to build collective power across the state, building relationships, but also building out the infrastructures that are needed to support the advocacy work that's happening across the state. And so we are building in support systems that are focused on developing leaders, as we recruit and engage new people. We also wanna make sure that we're developing them to lead this work. We're also looking to build relationships with our local media and outlets across the state to help influence and change the narrative about people with records. And then also, we are introducing policy that would actually remove some of the statutes that are creating these permanent punishments for individuals. This year, we introduced a bill called "The Free Act", which removes language from the 1975 Probate Act that restricts individuals with felony convictions from being an executor or administrator over in the state. This simply means, last year, my father passed away. I'm next of kin. But because I have a 25-year-old felony conviction, I was unable to carry out my father's last wishes. And so, the goal here was to introduce the Free Act as a way of showing the broader impacts of permanent punishments outside of just employment and housing. But ultimately, the goal is to implement Clean Slate policy or any policy that removes or allows individuals to move forward after, like I said before, their arrest or conviction record. So right now, we're in the building phase of really just trying to focus on building out these regional tables across the state to help with our advocacy efforts.

- Fantastic. Thank you. Dan, as I started to say earlier, I know there's a lot of challenges in Missouri that you're working through, but I did want to give you the chance to touch on In2action as an organization, and what you all are working on, in addition to the brief introduction I provided at the beginning when it comes to helping individuals with records.

- Sure, absolutely. At In2action, what we have found to be most effective, and we're a smaller agency, we serve about 60 people at a time. But the way that we're able to help people overcome some of the challenges of transitioning back into the community with a record is based a lot just on individual relationships. Relationships with college admissions, professionals, relationships with employers and business owners, relationships with landlords. But unfortunately, we have 380 people a week being released from prison in the state of Missouri, and we're talking about helping dozens. So it's really a small piece of the solution, although very impactful for the people

that we're working with. And I also worked as the reentry coordinator for the Department of Corrections, here in the state of Missouri. And what we have found is, the most support is needed at the community level, that community perception and community attitudes need to be changed through the sharing of the truth. And the reality of the work that we're doing, what we're advocating for is not going to compromise public safety, it's not going to put people at a greater risk. We can do this very responsibly, and it's being done very responsibly throughout the nation. So, on the more macro level, we're looking at community engagement type efforts, and just trying to educate people.

- That's a theme that I think resonates through the work that all of you are doing. Sheena and Erin, I wanna bring it back to you here. Doing this work across the country with, I've lost track, of how many states you're actively working in, some of them represented here. Wanted to see if you had anything to share in terms of building this momentum nationwide or what individuals can look to do within their states, starting organizations, joining organizations, kind of that national perspective that you each have.

- Yes. Thanks, Nicholas. We're really excited about what's ahead for our Clean Slate Initiative and also our partners across the country because of the ongoing momentum that's happening. There's opportunity, actually, to pass some federal legislation that we're really excited about right now. It's called the Clean Slate Act. And I'm grateful to the leadership of Representative Blunt Rochester and Representative Reschenthaler for taking this issue up in Congress. It's definitely a critical first step in addressing the collateral consequences of having a record. And the Clean Slate Act would actually establish automatic sealing a number of arrest records in low level non-violent drug offenses for people who have successfully completed their sentence. It actually would create a petition-based system that is non-existent right now. And what I'm really excited about is that I'm looking forward to Clean Slate serving as a model across the country for other reforms ahead, showing how bipartisan support can actually move a legislation, that people could come together across political spectrums that directly impacted people could be at the center of creating policies and advancing policies and moving policies that will impact our communities and bring public safety, and that it takes all of us to come together to make things happen. So when you look at the Clean Slate Initiative across the country, in all of our states, there's business partners at the table, there's faith communities at the table, there are legal services at the community, directly impacted people, grassroots organizations. And I look forward to continuing this, that we continue serving as a model, and for states ahead. And states have been reaching out. Elected officials, organizations wanna know how they could advance Clean Slate, and even business communities. As Erin was talking about earlier, they like to say there's a employee shortage, but there's not. There's a lot of people who are eligible, who are, in a workforce, is ready to move

forward, but they're locked out because of the barriers of having a record. And businesses are trying to figure out how do they remove those barriers and how do they get on board to create opportunities for folks. So, I'm really excited about that. As far as our states, we have a lot of states that are actually moving legislation. I'll let Erin, who I know who's really excited to be able to talk about the states that are moving forward and the impact that's gonna have.

- Thank you. I mean, to look to your question of what's this look like at a grassroots level, I was fortunate to come on board with the Clean Slate Initiative almost two years ago when we really were making an important shift with our partners and how we approached these campaigns. As Sheena said, making sure that we are really looking at all of the folks who have a vested interest in this and bringing folks together to drive forward legislation. And to not only pass that legislation, but also to build community support to ensure that those laws are implemented well, which doesn't just mean the technical aspects. You can pass a law and put the technical implementation pieces together, but if people don't know what that means for their lives, and they don't know that they don't have to check the box, they don't know where to go to get information, then we're missing that human impact. And so, it's been really incredible to see the momentum following the leadership of Pennsylvania, of Noella, in Utah. We have since passed laws, with our state partners, in Michigan, in Delaware, in Connecticut. Those laws will go into effect over the course of the next several years. Those laws all include relief for certain felony convictions, which is incredibly important and something that we are, collectively as a movement, dedicated to expanding eligibility, as folks have said before. In those states that have passed the laws, I think it's really powerful to see the ways that they are continuing to engage with community to build the greater we. We have laws moving in numerous states. Oklahoma's legislation is moving through committee. There's legislation moving through committee in Colorado, New York has a law that is close to passage. There's been recent commitment to have it done by the end of the session from the Senate, the Assembly and the Governor's office. And then there are laws introduced in numerous other states. And then, for example, partnership with Marlon. We work really closely on the Illinois campaign, and are working to make sure that the legislation that we do introduce at some point this year is really informed by impacted communities, by community members. So, doing a lot of grassroots base building. And then also not just doing, I guess, bidirectional education. We wanna know what people wanna see, and we also want to be engaging people to understand what the opportunity is. And so, when you said you don't know how many states, I'm like, "I'm supposed to know this, but I don't know either anymore" because it's picking up, picking up. We have probably 15 states where we are working in coalition, but all the time, we have states reaching out, interested in learning more, legislators reaching out and community members reaching out. And so, I think there is a lot on the horizon, I know

there's a lot on horizon.

- Even Hawaii reached out. I know I'm looking forward to seeing how they wanna work together.

- Sure. I mean, a trip out there is probably necessary in order to be on the ground and understand what's going on in there.

- [Noella] It's gonna be full team effort.

- The next conference in Hawaii.

- Sure, sure. Well, Erin, talking through that made me think there's a wide range of people listening to this today, those directly impacted trying to maybe figure out what to do for themselves or for a loved one or a family member. There are others who maybe are interested in pushing momentum in their own state forward. So if I can, before I circle back to where Sheena led us, as to excitement about what's next, curious from each of you, advice you might have for individuals who want to enter into this space, want to push for themselves or for others. I know it varies by state, but you all have very direct experience getting involved with this. So Noella, if I could start with you. You've reflected on where you started and where Clean Slate Utah started. But yeah, any advice you have for others who want to be pushing this forward in their states?

- Yeah, sure. Telling your story is so powerful and was a huge part of our campaign in Utah. It took lots of dialogue to get to a law passage and a lot of that dialogue needed to occur between people who had very different points of view. And I remember the first time I met with law enforcement about Clean Slate. The police officer I was meeting with was just shaking his head, like, "No. Police will never support this." While by the time our law passed, they came and testified that the statewide police chiefs association testified in support of our bill. And how we got there was really the stories of people with records. And it was a lot of listening sessions, it was a lot of showing people how people with records do change. People recover. They change their lives. They go on to give so much back, and want to give so much back if we provide them with opportunities. And so, the first piece of advice I would have is tell your story, get involved, connect with your local organizations, see how you can put your voice out there. If there's a bill moving through your legislature, come testify. It does matter. It does make a difference when constituents come and share their experiences with lawmakers. And the more you can show that this does impact a lot of people, it's incredibly common, and that people want this to happen, lawmakers pay attention to that kind of stuff. For the organizations or advocates, for Clean Slate policies, my advice would be, start building your coalition. I loved what Dan was saying about relationships, it takes so many different groups and people to make this happen. So, engage with your public safety

organizations, the prosecutors, the police organization. Start a dialogue. Start seeing where there's common ground. Work with your business chamber. Our business chamber in Utah was extremely supportive of Clean Slate, and that was so helpful, and so surprising, I think, to some lawmakers that our statewide chamber would be so involved in getting this legislation passed. But we need to diversify talent pools. We need these people back into the workforce. And having that huge showing from our chamber was extremely helpful. Our bill in Utah was unanimous. That was because of this coalition building relationship work that everybody here has been emphasizing. My last piece of advice is learn how records are stored, kept, and how agencies are manually clearing records now. You can't change the system that exists until you understand it. And so, start getting to know your court administrators, start understanding how your state police stores records. And mapping out that process and developing ideas and working with agencies to brainstorm, "Okay. We have this process, how do we fix it? What are your recommendations? How would you do this?" That was advice given to me from Pennsylvania, and I think it made a huge difference to just spend several days shadowing those agencies and mapping together how we could transform it into an automated system.

- Fantastic. Lots of great tips there for people to get involved in. I see heads nodding there, Marlon, anything you'd like to add to that?

- Absolutely. So, for me, when I think about the question you ask around, what advice would I give somebody? First, I think about when I was sentenced to a 20-year federal prison sentence, and how that was my introduction to organizing and policy work, because I was angry. I didn't believe that I deserved 20 years. And so I started to research and to learn, even while I was on the inside. And I remember in 2010, when the Fair Sentencing Act passed, my sentence was reduced from 20 to 14 years, so I ended up serving 10 1/2 years in prison. But when I was released from prison, I came out looking to get involved. And it was one of those things where I was learning, as we say, like, as we were building the plane. But one of the things I realized was that it's important to have our voices in meetings when we develop policy. And not only with the creation of policy, but also just this legislative session, we took almost a hundred people that are directly impacted to Springfield to talk to legislators directly. And so, even just seeing the impact that that had on legislators, because they would respond with some of these extreme examples. And we would say, "No, I'm a person with a record standing in front of you." Some legislators, we were able to persuade, some, we were not. But I think what they respected was the consistency of seeing us in the capital and continuing to lobby the bill. And so, I would tell folks to get involved. If policy is not your thing and, and you are an artist, then use your social media outlets to promote the movement. Whatever outlet or whatever vehicles you have that could help us move this work forward, I would encourage folks to do so. Whether it's through, like

I said, through the media, getting involved through legislation, community organizing, telling your story. But just find ways to get involved because there's a difference between people complaining about something but then actually getting in the game and becoming a player in the game to help us bring about change. I would just encourage folks to get involved, and you don't necessarily have to just get in and expect to know everything. I think one of the things that I love about this work is that you learn as you go, and it's okay to make mistakes. And to learn from those mistakes, and then to come back again. So, I would say, just get involved. Get involved.

- Fantastic. Dan, wanna conclude this thought with you. See if there's anything you'd like to add to this in terms of how others can make an impact in where they are.

- Yeah. I don't have a lot to weigh in with on that. What I've seen with a lot of the work that we're doing, though, is the personal stories is what moves people. People need to know what really goes on with us as we try to navigate our society here, in the United States, with a record.

- Sorry, I'm sitting here talking to myself. I was trying to make a plug.

- I thought it was me. I saw everybody head nod, and I was like, "I think I'm the only one who can't hear him."

- Everybody was being very polite and pretending they could hear me. Wanted to make a plug, if you have a question for our panelists, we'll have some time here. This does go until 15 after the hour, so when I have some space for our panelists. If you want to enter those into the Q&A, as we wrap up here. Sheena, you kicked us off with a lovely way to kind of round us out, and I want to continue that thread here. All of you are doing such tremendous work, a lot to be happy about and feel proud of. But knowing the work that you're doing, I'm sure there's plenty more that you wanna be doing. So I wanted to kind of give everyone a chance here just to share what's next, maybe for their organization or for themselves, and what they're most excited about when we look at the future of helping individuals with criminal records clear those records and really move on to second chances. Dan, I'm gonna start where I finished and see what's next for In2action, and what are you most excited about?

- Sure. What I'm most excited about is just trying to make a bigger impact across the state instead of just locally within our community and only a few dozen people at a time at that. I've been able to develop some relationships with state legislators. And I know that we have some legislators that are supportive of a automated expungement process. So I'm looking forward to connecting with those and looking at the next step of getting some draft language proposed and get it

submitted to the legislature.

- That's fantastic. You've obviously got some great allies here on the panel with you, and I'm sure others around the state and around the country are very supportive of that. Marlon, let me kick it over to you. What's next for Fully Free, and what are you most excited about?

- So for Fully Free, what's next is, this summer, we're gonna do a lot of get out to vote work, encouraging people directly impacted to hopefully increase voter turnout amongst the directly impacted community, and also lift up the issues that impact us with arrest or conviction records. I would also say I'm just excited around just the movement and the momentum that's happening right now. And so, I'm just excited about, like, we have a huge community here that's actively involved in this work that we're trying to mobilize and really build out. And so I'm excited about just being able to travel the state again this summer and building relationships across the state and really developing new leaders to get folks involved. We just had a lobby day last Wednesday, where we had about 60 people directly impacted show up to the capital, and there was a lot of excitement. And so we're looking at, hopefully, this becoming an annual thing every year. But I'm just excited in general about just all of the moving pieces that's happening now, as we think about just providing liberation for people that are living with arrest or conviction records.

- Absolutely. Yeah, it is great I think. While the pandemic hasn't gone anywhere, I think there's a little more ability to be out now. I know that that probably feels good to be back in the communities with more bigger than we have been in the past. Noella, what about Clean Slate Utah, and you, personally? I know you've got some things coming up.

- Yeah. We are still busy in Utah, for sure. We just wrapped up our legislative session. And Clean Slate, along with many other organizations and coalition, just passed two expungement related bills, which are very exciting, the first one expands eligibility. I know a lot of people on this call have touched about numerical limits and exclusions for particular offenses. And I saw some questions in the chat around this as well. This is going to be an ongoing effort, change is incremental, but we're really excited to see some expansion of some of the numerical limits in Utah. Our second bill tackles fees. So while Clean Slate is totally free to the individual, there are many individuals who have misdemeanor records or certain felony records that still have to be cleared under that petition-based court process. The fees really add up for those because there's filing fees in every case, there's application fees. And so, we passed a bill this past session to eliminate those fees as part of a pilot program for one year, and hope to come back next year with data to show the legislature that, by eliminating those fees, we are increasing access



to expungement at all levels. And that expungement truly makes a difference in people's lives, it helps them to get access to employment and housing opportunities. So we're very excited about that legislation, and we'll continue the work next year as Clean Slate Utah. Clean Slate Utah is now growing. We've been able to get some grants and do some fundraising. It's been a volunteer organization to date, and so we're excited to be hiring our first full-time executive director. We have many, many people that we're serving, and we're really excited to be prioritizing a person with a record for that position. I have worked with many, many people who have records as a public defender and in other capacities, but I truly believe, and I'm inspired by the people in this panel who have records and are leading this work and wanna move into that direction in Utah. So, I will be stepping aside as the executive director, moving to the board, helping that person grow into their new role. And then will be supporting that work through Rasa, which is a company that I have founded to create a mobile app to make it really easy for people to determine what's on their record and what is eligible for both automatic clearance and petition-based clearance. So, hope to continue my work with Clean Slate Utah, as I build this app for Rasa. The need for that arose in our implementation efforts. Utah's law is very impactful. Over 450,000 Utahns will have at least one record automatically wiped, close to 10% of our population will have a fully clean record as a result of this law. But there's still more work to do, and one of the problems is that people whose records are automatically cleared will not be directly notified by the government. That's for a lot of reasons. We had a notification requirement in our law, but as we started digging into the address data we had for individuals, a lot of it was old, it was unreliable. A lot of apartments, shelters, recovery organizations. And so, lawmakers felt that we were going to spend a lot of money to send out notice about really sensitive things to probably the wrong people. So, Clean Slate Utah and our coalition of over 50 community-based organizations throughout the state are, as our law went into effect, Utah began automatically clearing records on February 10th of this year. We are working to spread the word through social media, through videos, through training case managers who have touchpoints with people with records to government agencies, letting people know about records. And then hopefully through this mobile app, which will be statewide, we'll be able to reach into rural areas where there aren't lawyers, there aren't organizations, and people desperately need help. So really excited to continue that work with Clean Slate Utah and see where everything goes, and be able to help individuals just really easily determine what their legal situation is, what their options are, and what the best next step is for them right away. So, all really exciting stuff.

- Oh, absolutely. Well, we are just over the top of the hour, and I wanna see if I can both acknowledge some answers to some questions that, Erin, you've already started to provide. As well as give you, Sheena, a chance here to share anything that's forthcoming for the

Clean Slate Initiative. I know you are a recent recipient of funding from McKenzie Scott, which is fantastic. I know she's leading the way as a philanthropist in the criminal justice reform space. You mentioned some changes to your website, connections to Clean Slate activities around the country. So hopefully people are taking those notes in the chat and we will certainly package it. But, anything that you'd like to share about what's next and any answers that you've started to provide here to our participants?

- I can make a very quick great segue from Noella's response, in terms of the work at the state level. Obviously, very excited for the laws that are poised to pass, but something that we are super excited about is just the implementation states and the implementation process. This is a new policy we are learning every day, like, lessons learned on what works, what makes implementation process stronger. We will be working in five states around implementation, and it's been really exciting to see the ways that states, as Noella had just described. Pennsylvania went back and eliminated unpaid fines and fees as a barrier to eligibility, Utah is going back for that. There's conversations in multiple of the other states that have passed their laws, even before they've gone into effect to think about the ways that access can be increased. I'm also just super excited to get on the ground. I'm an organizer, I come from the grassroots. We can all be out there now and doing the public education around these laws and talking to people. We've just got really powerful efforts in those five states. So that's where I'm excited. And I will pass it to Sheena to close this one out.

- Nicholas, you mentioned the donation from Mackenzie Scott, which we're very appreciative of, and also all the other people who have invested in this organization and the people that we're serving. And I would say, the thing that I'm excited about is, even with that donation, I am looking forward to doing deeper work that has more racial equity outcomes, impacting black and brown people who have been impacted the most. And we also realize that some of that is probably gonna be looking towards working in the South. We knew the South was the area we wanted to dig in. I live in Florida, I see folks who are in the chat talking about Florida. But in the South, it takes a little bit longer runway to get to automation like Clean Slate. And so, looking forward to really taking these resources to support state partners that's working in the South to get to Clean Slate. And the thing I would say that we're most excited about is our first annual convening, which will be happening in Detroit, Michigan in May. We'll be convening our state partners for the first time. Clean Slate really got running during the pandemic at the start of the pandemic. So, we'll meet some of our state partners in person for the first time doing a lot of sharing and networking, and also going through some research, and just coming together to see how we can also support each other. So I'm looking forward to us coming together. That's in May, and if folks are interested, you can get more information on our

website as we'll be updating it.

- Fantastic. Thank you. Well, we do have a few more minutes here. As I said, we'll go to 15 after the hour. So thank you to all of those that have provided questions. I see, as I said, Erin, you've started to pass along some information about different Clean Slate campaigns, there was a question about Texas. The Cleanslatetexas.org website was provided there. There was a question around research in a paper, looking at different aspects. Happy to have anyone chime in here around research. I know, Erin and your team, you have research that's going on there. I will mention that the Clean Slate Clearinghouse does have resources available, and some of that does include some journal articles and recent research reports in this space. Similarly, there's a session on Wednesday around collateral consequences. The National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Criminal Conviction also provides resources related to the impact of a criminal record. We'll provide much more information there. So I know there is a general thirst for research in this space. So Erin, don't know if you wanna share anything there about what your team's done in the research space. You've all provided stats and figures along the way here.

- Yeah. I was answering in the chat the question about the timeline, so I just sent that. So, we've been really fortunate to have a lot of dedicated researchers interested in this. There are folks in Michigan, they're in California, elsewhere, who've already published reports on what we call the second chance gap. So that's the gap between eligibility and the uptake and the petition-based process, which is a really powerful tool for getting folks to understand just how limiting the petition-based process is. The Clean Slate Initiative is also working with a variety of researchers to really connect them with experts, folks on the ground, et cetera, to assess how these policies are working. It's really important to us, at the Clean Slate Initiative, that we're not just passing laws, as I said, but we're passing laws that are impactful. And so we wanna know if there are things that, if things aren't working the way we intended, we wanna know if we are having disparate, we aren't having the racial justice impact that we wanna see. If there are continued barriers so that we can go back with our partners and work to alleviate any of those issues. And so, over the course of the next several years, I think we'll be seeing a lot of increased research on how these policies are working. And as well as, from internally, us putting out best practices in development with our partners around how to move these bills. And we are learning in real time. These are complex laws that intersect with a lot of other laws, occupational licensing, fines and fees, federal statute, et cetera. And so putting out reports to provide information to folks on what they should look to when they're developing and designing their policies.

- Absolutely. I'll second that. So, the National Institute of Justice is hosting a session on April 21st looking at just this, kind of the

under-researched aspects of reentry, mostly around expungement of criminal records and the impact of those records. So, we'll provide information on that session, which can provide even more research into this aspect, as well as the research that, Erin, you mentioned. Not to skate past that too quickly, but I know we're always gonna be short on time and full on questions, which is fantastic. Just a couple of points, this session is fully recorded. So anybody that missed an earlier portion can view this. We hope to have that posted in May of this year. Likewise, you can reach out to the National Reentry Resource Center with any questions if we don't get to those today. I know Erin has provided the contact information as well. All of our panels I'm sure would be more than happy to speak with folks if they're interested. There are some questions that are very state-specific. I think you've all pointed out that things do vary state to state, whether that's time periods or specific records that could be cleared. If you are seeking legal services information, the Clean Slate Clearinghouse does provide legal services contacts across all of the states. So, please do reach out. [cleanslateclearinghouse.org](http://cleanslateclearinghouse.org) has that information. There were a couple of questions. One that I wanted to see if we could touch on was working more effectively, I guess, through Clean Slate policies and working with employers in places where Clean Slate policies are on the books or have come through. Noella, you mentioned that this really started with a workforce issue. Any suggestions you have around effectiveness, navigating Clean Slate in employment, and really getting employers on board with working with individuals with criminal records. Noella, if you have anything that you haven't already stated there.

- I think really just engaging with employers and collecting employers who are willing to be second chance employers, in my experience, it gives other employers a lot of comfort if you can point to other employers who have tried to hire folks with that background to share their experiences. And then I think just encouraging people to be more nuanced. Somebody on the panel, maybe it was Marlon, mentioned that a lot of employers, or Dan, have a blanket policy, "If you have a record, we're not gonna hire you" and encouraging them to really think about, "Do you really need to be that broad with your policy? Or might there be particular roles where someone with a record could be a great fit? And why do you have this policy? And what are the work duties? What is the concern about the criminal record?" Really kind of like diving into that. I think just with anything else, it's a process. It's a lot of communication. There's still a lot of fear. There's liability concerns. Obviously, record clearing helps alleviate a lot of those concerns, but even in the interim, just getting a sense of how many second chance employers there are, how many prominent nationally now, JP Morgan Chase is a great example, Walmart is a great example. There's more and more companies that are being very public about wanting to hire people with records because they add value to the workforce. Using some of those stories and holding up some of those great leadership examples, I think is a great way to make

progress. So, that's probably what I would add there.

- Great. Wonderful. And I will put in a plug around workforce and connections there. So, the National Reentry Resource Center, not only do we have plenty of events the rest of this month focused on workforce and employment particularly among individuals with a criminal record, the National Reentry Resource Center Website has lots of information on connecting with employers and building up workforce development around individuals that have been impacted by the justice system. Similarly, there's a question here around working with juveniles who are completing the periods of incarceration, getting them connected to the workforce. I don't know if anybody on this panel wants to chime in there. It's a little bit outside of what we've talked about, but it obviously is a large population, super impactful to be able to connect to young people who are coming out of incarceration into the workforce. So I don't know if anybody wants to chime in there with a couple of minutes that we have, in terms of working specifically with the younger population.

- I was just on a panel in Texas on South by Southwest with the Responsible Business. I always get the acronym misspelled, RIBJI or RBIJ. Cecilia will kill me if she sees this webinar, I'm just gonna let y'all know that. But Walmart.org or was on the panel as well. And I know they just came out with an initiative to actually help young people, maybe at risk or who have been impacted by the system around getting a job and development. So, there are programs. We are hearing more and more around resources for that population. And also I would say, it's really helpful. We have not really focused too much on juvenile expunges because people are already doing it. It's already happening in states. Even in Florida, a bill just passed to help clear records, do seal and expunge for people who have got offenses under the age 18. So, there is a lot of momentum happening around for juveniles and young people as well.

- Wonderful. I appreciate that. I will mention, there are lots of juvenile-focused sessions throughout Second Chance Month. And again, there's a juvenile content specifically on the National Reentry Resource Center. I do encourage you to check that out. I am putting in the chat now a link to the NIJ session for additional research on this. And one final plug for the collateral consequences session on Wednesday of this week with, Sheena, your colleague there in Florida who's now a BJA Second Chance Fellow. Angel's gonna be talking a little bit about your efforts, combined efforts around voting rights there in Florida. We'll also look at addressing housing barriers and addressing again, employment barriers, particular to occupational licensing. So that will be Wednesday at the same time, at 12:00 PM. You can find all of this, as you see here, [NationalReentryResourceCenter.org](http://NationalReentryResourceCenter.org). [Buildsecondchances.org](http://Buildsecondchances.org) is our home for all things Second Chance Month, so do check it out. We do have three more weeks of events jampacked with amazing panelists. I will be

biased and say, I don't know if you can top this panel by much. I really am humbled to have all of you on today. We're so pleased to work with each of you. Look forward to doing more of it. As I mentioned, the Clean Slate Clearinghouse is working to fortify our national relationships and looking forward to learning from even more from all the work that you're doing. So thank you all again for your time on the panel today. Thank you to all of our participants. This will be recorded, in case you missed it, or if you wanna pass it on to your colleagues. And I will wrap up here to respect everyone's time. Thank you so much to all of you, and have a great rest of the day.