EXHIBIT C3

THE CLEAN SLATE INITIATIVE

Verbal Testimony for the Arkansas Joint Committee on the Judiciary on the Discussion of How to Reduce the Number of Prison Beds Needed in Arkansas

By Chelsea Murphy, Senior Campaign Strategist at The Clean Slate Initiative

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Thank you, Chairs Dalby and Clark and members of the House and Senate Committees on the Judiciary.

My name is Chelsea Murphy and I am a Senior Campaign Strategist at The Clean Slate Initiative (CSI). CSI is a national non-profit that works across the country and in Congress to pass and implement laws that streamline the government's processes for sealing eligible arrest and conviction records.

I appreciate that as this committee explores opportunities to reduce the number of prison beds in Arkansas, and I would encourage this committee not to overlook the important roles that stability and opportunity play in reducing recidivism.

It may be surprising to learn that as of 2021, nearly one million adults in Arkansas, or 40% of the adult population, have some form of a record. This means that four out of every 10 Arkansans are not eligible for many jobs, housing, or student loans. These barriers to stability remain even after someone has been held accountable by completing all court-ordered requirements and has remained crime-free for several years. Their record stays with them—making it more difficult to earn a decent living, find stable housing, or access educational opportunities. Clean Slate laws can offer families a fair shot at building a better future for themselves.

Fourteen states, including Missouri, Oklahoma, Utah, and Pennsylvania, have already passed Clean Slate laws. Notably, making record sealing laws more efficient remains an issue where there is support from both parties, and as a result, approximately 18 million adults are on a path to having part or all of their records sealed without clogging up the courts or making hard working folks find their way through a bunch of red tape. The impacts in states that have implemented Clean Slate laws have been both positive and substantial.

One key to the success is the creation of an automated process. By leveraging technology with human oversight to identify eligible records and grant record relief, states successfully - and significantly - streamline the sealing process. Fortunately, Arkansas has the opportunity to create a process that works well for the people in this great state, ensuring a past mistake does not become a life sentence to poverty for those who have paid for their mistakes and turned their lives around. By sealing old records, lawmakers can remove the stigma that comes with carrying past records and empower individuals with a fighting chance to secure meaningful employment, find stable housing, and contribute positively to their communities.

A recent survey found that people who receive relief report experiencing improvements in their lives, particularly in employment. Among respondents from Pennsylvania, Utah, and Michigan - which started implementing automatic record sealing in 2019, 2020, and 2023, respectively:

- nearly half (42%) reported improvement in work, employment, personal finances, or public assistance.
- 35% reported improvement in personal and family relationships, and
- 34% reported improvement in health, mental health, or self-esteem.

The Clean Slate Initiative would welcome the opportunity to work with Arkansas' state agencies once they are tasked with implementing automated record-sealing processes enacted by the Legislature. Alongside our state and national partners, The Clean Slate Initiative has assisted states throughout the country effectively implement Clean Slate laws, and while every state has its own systems and processes for record sealing, commonalities exist across states and we can draw upon our broad experience to help navigate successful implementation.

In summary, as this committee explores opportunities to reduce the number of Prison beds in Arkansas, The Clean Slate Initiative strongly encourages this committee to support automated record sealing for eligible individuals, recognizing recidivism can be reduced by creating a positive impact on the lives of those seeking redemption and reintegration into society.

Thank you for your time and consideration.