



PRESS RELEASE
July 11, 2018

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**Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
to Examine Collateral Consequences of a Felony Record on West Virginians**

Washington, DC – On Thursday, July 19, 2018, in Charleston, the West Virginia Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights will hold a public hearing to examine the negative collateral consequences of a felony record on West Virginians.

Committee Chair Tara N. Martinez stated, “I believe that residents of this state have no idea the extent to which a felony record can continue to limit the life chances of ex-offenders once released from custody even though they have served the time for their crimes. The West Virginia Advisory Committee has invited a number of experts who will share their knowledge about the impact a felony record can have on a person’s access to employment, housing, occupational licenses and public benefits in this state.”

The hearing will begin at 9:00 a.m. EDT. Experts will be grouped on panels, with two presentations in the morning and three in the afternoon.

Public Comments

At the conclusion of the panels, the Committee will hold an open public comment session – starting at 5:00 p.m. EDT – when members of the audience will be invited to make short statements about these issues. **Those wishing to speak at the session must sign-up at the meeting room no later than 4:30 p.m. on the hearing day.**

“The Committee is very concerned that ex-offenders who wish to speak at the hearing not be further burdened because they have a criminal record,” said Ms. Martinez. She continued, **“To ensure their privacy, the names of ex-offenders speaking on the panels or during the open session will NOT be made public either on the agenda, in the hearing transcript or in any other document published by the Committee.”**

Next Steps

There will be a post-hearing transcript, and the Committee will submit a public written report to the Commission summarizing the results of its examination, including findings and recommendations.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement, and is the only federal entity with a network of state advisory committees. Committee members are appointed by the Commission to four-year terms. They serve without compensation and study civil rights issues in their states. For more information about the Commission and its Advisory Committees, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Hearing Record

The hearing record will remain open for 30 days after the meeting. Written statements and documents, including articles/reports/studies, received by the Commission's Eastern Regional Office (ERO) by August 20, 2018, will be included in the hearing record. Comments and documents may be mailed to the ERO at: 1331 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 1150, Washington, DC 20425, or emailed to ero@usccr.gov.

AGENDA (Subject to change)

**Capitol Complex, 1900 Kanawha Blvd, East, Committee Room, #215-E
Charleston, WV 25305**

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: 9:00 a.m.

- **Tara N. Martinez, Chair, West Virginia Advisory Committee**

PANEL PRESENTATIONS: 9:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

I. Felony Record's Impact on Access to Housing: 9:15 a.m.

- **Kitty Dooley, Esq., Member Board of Commissioners, Charleston-Kanawha Housing Authority**
- **Beverly Sharp, Program Coordinator, Criminal Justice Department, Ashland Community & Technical College, Ashland, Kentucky; Reentry Initiatives Coordinator, West Virginia Council of Churches**
- **Matt Boggs, Executive Director, Recovery Point**
- **Maria Rose Hampton, Outreach worker, Oxford House**
- **Housing Panelist**

II. Felony Record's Impact on Access to Employment: 10:45 a.m.

- **Betsy Jividen, Commissioner, WV Department of Corrections**
- **Michelle M. Foster, President & CEO, Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation**
- **Matthew Watts, President & CEO, Hope Community Development Corporation**
- **Employment Panelist**

LUNCH: 12:15 p.m.

PANEL PRESENTATIONS: 1:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

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III. Legislative Responses: 1:00 p.m.

- **The Honorable Michael Pushkin, WV House of Delegates**
- **The Honorable Jill Upson, WV House of Delegates**
- **Brenda Thompson, General Counsel, Public Defender Services, Charleston, WV**

IV. Felony Record's Impact on Access to Occupational Licenses: 1:45 p.m.

- **Prof. Priya Baskaran, WV University, Morgantown, WV**
- **Linda Lyter, President, WV Association of Licensing Boards; Executive Director, WV Massage Therapy Licensure Board**
- **Licensure Panelist**

V. Felony Record's Impact on Access to Public Benefits: 3:15 p.m.

- **J. Robert Leslie, Senior Deputy Attorney General, WV Office of the Attorney General**
- **Jeri Kirby, Assistant Professor, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV**
- **Lida Shepherd, American Friends Committee, Charleston, WV**
- **Jeremiah Underhill, Legal Director, Disability Rights of WV, Charleston, WV**
- **Public Benefits Panelist**

CLOSING REMARKS

BREAK: 4:45 p.m.

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION: 5:00 p.m.

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