

SUPPORT TESTIMONY - AB291 - Battle Born Progress - Shelby Swartz

I rise in strong support of this legislation because no one should be haunted by an arrest record when they have not been convicted of a crime. The presumption of innocence is a cornerstone of our justice system, yet too often, individuals face lifelong consequences from an arrest that never resulted in prosecution or a conviction.

A mere allegation should not be a barrier to employment, housing, or education. People deserve the chance to move forward without the burden of explaining past legal encounters that did not lead to guilt. This bill affirms the principle that justice should not leave a permanent stain on those who have been cleared of wrongdoing.

Furthermore, when a record is sealed, it should remain sealed—without exceptions that undermine the intent of record-clearing laws. Everyone deserves the opportunity to rebuild their lives without outdated accusations resurfacing.

This legislation is about fairness, dignity, and ensuring that our justice system does not continue to punish individuals who have already been exonerated. I urge my colleagues to support this important step toward justice and second chances.