

Dear Criminal Justice Committee,

I am a first time, nonviolent offender, who wishes to put the past behind him. I pose no future risk of breaking any laws. I will never again find myself in the midst of the Texas Criminal Justice System. I will never again conduct myself in a way that does not bring honor to myself and to my family. My life is different now; I want the state's records to acknowledge this, and to help make it possible to put my past behind me.

My hopes of returning to a normal life cannot be realized at this time, thanks to the current wording of Texas expungement laws. Please take note that, I am not asking for my record to be wiped clean, I am solely asking that the government allow me to earn my freedom. If the state would give me one percent of trust, I would be willing to earn the other ninety-nine. What I want is the chance and the opportunity to redeem myself. I know that **SB 1477** is legislation that is good for Texas.

Deferred adjudication I thought, would allow me to redeem my life, and to help me make something of myself. For 5 years now I have wished to be able to rejoin Texans as a fellow citizen. Thanks to deferred adjudication, I have not been able to find meaningful employment. However, this has not destroyed my hopes that one day I would be able to rise to my place in life. I being a nonviolent first time offender currently have to live with deferred adjudication on my record forever, and employers, apartments, and state agencies are currently very paranoid of anything on a criminal record regardless of it was first time deferred adjudication or habitual repeat offender.

To explain the reason why I found it important to participate in this hearing today, please take a minute to understand my situation. Healthcare is non-existent for me, and employment on a permanent basis is not possible. I cannot get an apartment or be bonded to start a business. I do not have a 401k plan, nor do I have stocks and bonds, I really have nothing. The economic impact that deferred adjudication has had on my life has forced me not to be able to enter into permanent employment, or do business in Texas. I cannot withstand the scrutiny of a Human Resources Department review of any kind. A discovery of my past, whether it is because I listed it on the job application, or because it was discovered through a background check, would automatically mean a denial of my employment. My first and only offence has the effect of me being treated as a monster.

My past has no pattern of criminality, yet in this society there is intense scrutiny placed on any infractions, regardless of how long ago they were or what they were about. I will never be able to get a job in Texas thanks to the fact that deferred adjudication is misunderstood by hiring companies. The effect of deferred adjudication law not to list a conviction on people's record; because of this I am asking for the possibility for expungement of my past.

A lifetime of torment is too much is overkill on punishing me for my offence. I am sorry for the one youthful, inconsiderate offence. I urge the committee to understand that there are many people just like me in this state; I am representing them through my efforts, and my web page www.deferredadjudication.org. A person, whose past haunts them to the point that they cannot work or live in Texas has what to look forward to? I doubt that the original intent of deferred adjudication was to impose lifetime disqualifications on people who were court ordered into the program. I think that **SB 1477** is legislation that is long overdue.

Sincerely,
Valente Gonzalez
Web Master of www.deferredadjudication.org