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FOR THE LOVE OF YOUTH: ASSEMBLYMEMBER SKINNER INTRODUCES THE “STARTING OVER STRONG” JUVENILE REENTRY BILL

Law will eliminate the up to \$150 record sealing fee that California counties can charge for juvenile record sealing for young people under the age of 26.

The East Bay Community Law Center, in partnership with Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and All of Us or None, is pleased to announce that today, Assemblymember Nancy Skinner will introduce the Starting Over Strong bill to eliminate the fee for juvenile record sealing for eligible youth.

Under existing law, a young person must pay up to \$150 dollars and petition the juvenile court in their county of residence to seal their record. “The price tag of sealing a juvenile record can keep a young person, who has successfully stayed out of trouble, from getting on the right track,” said Jerry Elster of All of Us or None. By eliminating the record-sealing fee, this bill will help young people like Alana, who postponed community college because she could not afford the fee to seal her record and so worried that her mistakes from years earlier would prevent her from succeeding.

Assemblymember Skinner’s leadership in authoring this bill takes inspiration from stories like Alana’s and grassroots support and organizing by youth directly affected. In 2012, youth began advocating for removal of the \$150 fee for juvenile record sealing in Alameda County because they realized that fees alone should not prevent any poor youth in California from fully realizing her or his potential.

“Increasing access to the juvenile record sealing process will make it possible for more young people to get jobs and housing, and is likely to reduce recidivism, which means a safer community for all of us,” said Rachel Johnson-Farias, an advocate at the East Bay Community Law Center. This Valentine’s Day, Assemblymember Skinner is showing her love for California’s youth by seeking to make the record sealing process affordable for all young people.

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The East Bay Community Law Center provides free legal services to eligible low income clients. Since its founding in 1988 by law students at UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law, EBCLC has become the largest provider of free legal services in the East Bay. To learn more about EBCLC, go to www.ebclc.org. EBCLC's Starting Over Strong project (SOS, a program of the Clean Slate Clinic) provides legal training, assessment and counseling, and holistic representation to help clear pathways for young people with prior juvenile records. Ultimately, SOS seeks to eliminate the enduring harsh punishment that results from the collateral consequences of juvenile adjudications, and secure a fair and equitable path for young people to exit the justice system once and for all.