

THE YOUTH EQUALITY AND REINTEGRATION ACT (THE YEAR ACT)

THIS IS THE YEAR FOR EQUALITY IN JUVENILE RECORDS REFORM

2014: In a vote of 145-1, the Legislature passed SHB 1651, the Youth Opportunities Act (YOA) to expand the process to seal juvenile records. Allowing youth to move on from past mistakes and have a second chance through juvenile record sealing reflects our core values: **fairness, equality, and opportunity.**

The YOA Was A Victory For Many, But Left Low-Income Youth Behind:

- ⇒ One barrier remains to making record sealing equally accessible to all youth: legal financial obligations (LFOs).
- ⇒ Courts must hold hearings for automatic record sealing once the youth completes all community supervision, is released from confinement or parole, and pays all LFOs.
- ⇒ **But low-income youth who cannot pay their LFOs cannot get their juvenile records sealed. So rich kids can seal while poor kids cannot.**

The YEAR Act Will Help Low-income Youth Seal Their Records By:

- ⇒ Refocusing LFO requirements on **compensating victims.**
- ⇒ Giving judges discretion to consider the youth's **ability to pay** when ordering restitution.
- ⇒ Affording youth the opportunity to get a record sealed after making a **good faith effort** to pay restitution and after fulfilling all other probation requirements.
- ⇒ Allowing youth to **still be held accountable** through a **civil judgment** after the record is sealed.

Kids don't need to be trapped for life, paying thousands of dollars in fines, fees, court costs and compounding interest.

The YEAR Act allows *all* youth, regardless of their socio-economic status, to pursue gainful **employment**, obtain affordable **housing**, and access equal **education**.