



# Boston City Council

## Committee on Public Safety

Stephen J. Murphy, *Chair*

October 6, 2009

Dear Councillors:

The Committee on Public Safety held a hearing on an order for a hearing on CORI reform to discuss needed changes to the CORI system (Docket #0281). This matter was sponsored by Councillor Murphy, referred to this Committee on Wednesday, February 11, 2009, and heard at a public hearing on Monday, October 5, 2009 at which public comment was taken. The purpose of the hearing was to discuss the current Criminal Offender Record Information Act and needed changes. Despite the original intent of the CORI system, it has become a mechanism that unduly punishes individuals as a result of long ago criminal activity or minor indiscretions.

At the hearing several individuals testified, including representatives from the City's administration, the Massachusetts Communities Action Network and several individuals such as Aaron Tanaka and Horace Small that are active in CORI reform. Although there are pending state bills, certain key components of reform were discussed. Any state reform must include a reduction in the record sealing times. Currently, individuals can wait decades to move on from their past, often resulting in lost job opportunities. The Commonwealth should establish a new system that eliminates cross identification. Other key elements of change discussed included limiting the types of information released based on the original purpose of the CORI search to ensure that the record searches are germane to the original inquiry. Individuals should also be afforded the opportunity to discuss their CORI records prior to being eliminated from a job because of it. Another major issue raised is that often times CORI records include information about cases that were dismissed or continued without a finding. Housing authorities and employers obtain information that leads to bias and adverse action without a true finding of any wrongdoing.

Change to the CORI system is long overdue. The City of Boston has taken it upon itself to enact its own reform and now the City of Boston calls upon the Commonwealth to do the same

By the Chair of the Committee on Public Safety, to which the following was referred:

**Docket #0281** An order for a hearing on CORI reform to discuss needed changes to the CORI system

based on information presented at the hearing and public comment gathered by the Committee and having considered the same, respectfully recommends that this matter **ought to be placed on file.**

For the Chair:

  
Stephen J. Murphy, *Chair*

Committee on Government Operations

77 W. 6th St.

# City of Boston In City Council

February 28, 2009

## ORDER OF CITY COUNCILOR STEPHEN J. MURPHY, For All Councilors

- WHEREAS:** The Massachusetts State Legislature passed the Criminal Offender Record Information Act to create the CORI system in 1972 in order to improve the flow of information within the criminal justice system by computerizing all criminal records to make them more readily available and systematically tracked for the use of police, prosecutors, probation officers and judges; **and**
- WHEREAS:** The CORI system has expanded beyond its original mission and capacity providing information to both public and private organizations, the agency that manages CORI receiving 1.5 million requests in 2004 alone, triple the request just 8 years prior in 1998; **and**
- WHEREAS** Because of this increased number of CORI requests, inaccurate reports, or misunderstandings about information in the records, is disseminated which adversely affects some constituents; **and**
- WHEREAS** A person will have information on the CORI system if s/he has ever been arrested, no matter the outcome of the case – including not guilty verdicts or cases that have been dismissed; **and**
- WHEREAS** The current CORI system may hinder some individuals from obtaining employment by including false information, marks against them for not guilty or dismissed cases or other inaccurate information; **and**
- WHEREAS** The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, like the rest of the country, is facing major unemployment issues because of the current economic crisis, and with Washington about to pass an economic stimulus package that will create new jobs here in the Commonwealth, now is the time to take action to ensure that comprehensive CORI reform is made so that the men and women impacted by a CORI record will have employment opportunities when they are available; **therefore be it**
- ORDERED** That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing on CORI reform to discuss much needed changes to the CORI system.

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In City Council REFERRED TO  
COMMITTEE ON

FEB 11 2009

Public Safety

CITY OF BOSTON  
IN CITY COUNCIL

DECEMBER 6 2009

THE COMMITTEE CHAIR OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
RESPECTFULLY REPORTS THAT THE MATTER  
WITHIN OUGHT  
TO BE PLACED ON FILE

CHAIR  
Stephen J. Murphy  
CITY CLERK

ACCEPTED.

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CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
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BOSTON, MA