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March 19, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Re: Support for SB 39

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin believes the goal of criminal sanctions should be to protect society through deterrence, incapacitation and reform. We support SB 39 because it focuses on the reform opportunity in the justice system.

The League supports SB 39 because it allows recognition of an offender's changed behavior. In the recent past an imbalance has been created in the justice system by increasing the punitive aspect of sanctions, resulting in difficulties for ex-offenders when seeking employment. Under SB 39 an expunged conviction is not considered a conviction for employment purposes.

The process of expungement as described in SB 39 provides ample opportunity for the court to determine statutory eligibility criteria for expungement and allows the judge to rule out expungement at the time of sentencing. This will prevent misuse, as the court will determine if the ex-offender will benefit and society will not be harmed.

We supported previously proposed expungement opportunities for anyone under age 26, and we now support SB39 as an appropriate expansion of this opportunity to any age. The ability to fully participate in responsible behavior in the community not only benefits the individual, it enriches and improves our communities.

We urge your support for SB 39.