
Kimberly Haven

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House Judiciary Committee

HOUSE BILL 586 - SUPPORT

A criminal record is a clear barrier to getting a job. For those who desire to serve the public - to provide help to our fellow citizens who need them, to rush into a burning building, or be the first on the scene and be able to render assistance, a past involvement with the criminal justice system, should not be used as a barrier to applying for these jobs. Let's face it, these are jobs that we need people to do....jobs that not many of us would aspire to, feel called to do, much less apply for.

This legislation is good policy. It builds on and expands the legislation passed by this body last year, that ensures that individuals who apply for a job, will not be asked on the application or prior to their first in-person interview. Individuals with criminal records are instructed on how to answer the question regarding their criminal history. They are told to answer honestly, and sometimes to even leave the question blank or state that they will explain in the interview. The problem is that they often do not even get the chance to have an interview. This is because they check the box on the job application saying they have a criminal record.

Their application is simply tossed aside - ignored or even thrown away. By checking this box, they are denied the opportunity to compete fairly for the job.

HB 586 is commonsense reform that creates the opportunity for an individual to explain their record and to state why they are the best candidate for the position.

This legislation does not deny employers access to criminal background information. Nor does it force employers to hire workers with criminal records. It simply defers criminal history until later in the process to give *all* applicants a fair chance to be judged, first and foremost, on their qualifications.

Everyone has the right to secure a steady job in order to support themselves and their families. Getting people back to work improves the safety of our communities, strengthens families and reduces dependence on government programs - goals we all share.

Past mistakes do not have to define the potential of an individual's future.

I strongly urge this committee to support HB 586.