Testimony in Support of House Bill 1192

Video Lottery Employee Licenses - Crimes of Moral Turpitude - Alterations

TO: Hon. Guy Guzzone, Chair, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: March 26, 2024

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports House Bill 1192, which would exempt an applicant for a video lottery employee license from disqualification for conviction, active parole, or probation within the prior seven years or current prosecution for any crimes involving moral turpitude if the conviction, active parole, probation, or prosecution involves a nonviolent misdemeanor offense, other than a crime involving gambling or the applicant will not be employed by the video lottery operation licensee in the operation of gaming or security.**

Maryland is currently facing a critical labor shortage. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's worker shortage index, Maryland falls within the "most severe" category with only 33 available workers for every 100 open jobs. The same report cites Maryland as having 54,778 unemployed workers, which it defines as "people that do not have a job, have looked for work in the last four weeks, and are currently available and able to work."

Across all industries, Maryland needs to reexamine the practices and qualifications that act as barriers or deterrents for individuals to obtain gainful employment. That is not to say that there should be no standards, be it education, experience, or safety considerations, that employers can require of prospective employees. However, these standards should be reflective of their ability to adequately perform the work and maintain a work environment that is safe for the public, the employees, and the employer. Criminal records should be used as a metric to determine whether a person should be hired, but only when their record has a direct relationship on their ability to do the job. House Bill 1192 acknowledges this fact by taking into account the nature of the offense and the position the applicant would hold within the State Lottery and Gaming Control Commission. This bill is a definitive step in the right direction in addressing Maryland's workforce shortage.

For these reasons, JOTF supports House Bill 1192 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, contact:
Kam Bridges / Senior Public Policy Advocate / Kam@jotf.org