



Last year, by passing House Bill 1399 unanimously, Washington state legislators took an important step and removed a needless barrier preventing people with criminal convictions from receiving an occupational license and beginning a career. This year, legislators should continue that bipartisan cooperation and support House Bill 1874, the next step in helping those with past convictions begin a new life.

Currently, people who have served prison time are prevented from receiving several occupational licenses, even if their convictions are unrelated to the industry or occurred many years ago. State licensing authorities should make a thoughtful and complete consideration of the circumstances of people applying for licenses. With bipartisan sponsorship, HB 1874 would require agencies to consider the nature of the offense, if the offense is related to the license, the age of the offender, time since the conviction, and other relevant factors that can inform the fitness of an applicant.

Research demonstrates that licensing barriers increase the likelihood that people with criminal convictions will re-offend.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, as the Obama Administration noted in its report on occupational licenses in 2015, "Laws restricting licensing opportunities for workers with criminal records have a disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic workers."<sup>2</sup>

HB 1874 builds on the continued work of this legislature in promoting rehabilitation and reintegration. It acknowledges the value of a vacated criminal record by protecting applicants who have had their record sealed, expunged, or pardoned. It also prohibits licensing authorities from disqualifying an applicant on the basis of juvenile adjudications, wisely recognizing that current professional licensing laws can unfairly burden people who may have a juvenile adjudication on their record but who are working hard to move beyond the mistakes of their youth.

We hope you will join us and support the reasonable reforms included in HB 1874, providing protections for the public while offering an important and compassionate opportunity for those looking to begin a new career and get a new start.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> "Turning Shackles into Bootstraps: Why Occupational Licensing Reform Is the Missing Piece of Criminal Justice Reform," Slivinski, Stephen, Center for the Study of Economic Liberty at Arizona State University, November 7, 2016, <https://csel.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2019-09/csel-policy-report-2016-01-turning-shackles-into-bootstraps.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> "Occupational licensing: A framework for policymakers," The U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Economic Policy, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the Department of Labor, July 2015, p. 35, at [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/licensing\\_report\\_final\\_nonembargo.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/licensing_report_final_nonembargo.pdf).