

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

I'm a CNC machinist and programmer, and I would like to express my support for HB 3097 and the need to ban the box from employment applications.

I myself am a convicted felon. At a very young age I made some mistakes and fell in with the wrong group of people and ended up being charged as the first minor charged as an adult.

Those charges have followed me my entire life. At each and every turn that I tried to get a job my felony convictions barred me immediately. As soon as I had to fill out the "check the box" form, most employers turned me down immediately or didn't respond to my application.

I did want people to understand that a common perception of what happens inside of a penitentiary is just a bunch of guys looking to hurt or harm you when they get out. That's just not the case. In my experience on the inside I found myself amongst a large group of guys who just wanted to have a family, get a job and see their children.

When I was released from prison I hit the streets applying for jobs. At every job you apply to you are met with the "check the box" on the application. As soon as you check that box it also offers a line underneath for an explanation. That explanation falls on deaf ears almost immediately. The chance to relate to the person, the hiring manager, the owner, whoever it should be is gone. There is no personal connection between you and the employer. There is no way to express your personality or to share the stuff that is not felony convictions that would assist you in getting that job.

I think that banning the box from job applications would only increase the possibility of criminals and convicted felons to be rehabilitated and move back into their societies, their communities, homes and families and do something productive.

By putting the box on the application and not allowing anybody ever to get a job or work, they are guaranteed to go back to crime. That is the only thing that is left.

This problem creates a lack of positivity for inmates being released back into society which is a must. You can't lock them up forever. It also creates a hardship for the public and the community. Unfortunately, taxpayers pay for the jail time the room, the food, the board.

That's why we have to ban the box. To give inmates a fair shot at having a job, a life and a family.

Sincerely,  
John Batchelder