

House Business and Labor Committee

March 25, 2015

RE: HB 3025

Chair Holvey, Members of the Committee,

My Name is Jim Houser and my wife and I own and have operated Hawthorne Auto Clinic at 4307 SE Hawthorne Blvd in Portland for 32 years. I am also co-chair of the Main Street Alliance of Oregon, a network of over 2500 Oregon small business owners working together to lift up the real voices of small business on public policy. I, and the Main Street Alliance of Oregon, strongly support HB 3025.

28 years ago, I hired an employee who, as it turns out, had a criminal history. He recently retired after nearly 3 decades as one of my best employees.

Having a criminal record doesn't mean being a bad employee: In my experience, people with criminal records are often model employees. They are frequently the most dedicated and conscientious. A lot of doors are shut to them, so when someone gives them an opportunity, they make the most of it.

Postponing a criminal background check, or asking a candidate questions about arrest or conviction records unrelated to job duties, until after a job offer has been made, gives an employer the opportunity to appreciate that the best person for the job may in fact have a record. Employers may actually learn that company policies requiring early background investigations are not in the best interest of either the company or the applicant.

From my perspective, why would an employer want to short-circuit the hiring process and deny themselves the opportunity to hire the best person for the job.

That is why our company has long ago removed from our job application all extraneous questions unrelated to job performance, including a criminal record.

In the end, the government can not always be expected to alone solve every community-based problem. Since the issue of successfully integrating former offenders back into society relies heavily on obtaining steady employment, employers who care about the communities that support them are going to have to step forward to do their part. Delaying criminal background questions or investigations until after the best person for the job has been determined provides an employer with maximum work force potential at minimal investment in time or inconvenience.

Over the years I have learned that what's good for my community is good for my business: As a small business owner, I know that when people have opportunities to succeed, the local community and economy thrives – and in turn my company thrives.

Thank you.