



Partners *for a*
Hunger-Free Oregon

Ending hunger before it begins.

To: Senate Committee on Workforce

From: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Affairs Director, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon

Subject: Statement of Support for HB 3025 A, the “Ban the Box Bill”

Date: May 20, 2015

When Oregon’s returning citizens have opportunities to earn a living, provide for their families, and make the most of a second chance, every community in Oregon is better off.

This bill boils down to a simple choice: when Oregonians who have paid their debt to society return to our communities, should they have a fair chance at employment opportunities that create family stability and safe neighborhoods? Or, should returning citizens continue to face difficult barriers to putting their lives back together, leading to a de facto life sentence of poverty, or – in far too many cases - a return to prison?

The choice is clear. Removing barriers to employment for Oregon’s returning citizens means stronger families and safer communities. The “box” on employment applications that screens out ex-offenders is one such barrier. It’s time to “ban the box” by passing HB 3025.

The biggest predictor of recidivism is employment. It is therefore crucial that our public policies encourage employment opportunities for Oregon’s returning citizens. Research shows that a criminal record reduces the likelihood of a job callback by 50%. This is deeply frustrating not only for recently-returning citizens looking for employment, but also for Oregonians who served time decades ago who are applying for jobs today.

This bill is pro-family. Removing “the box” from employment applications means that returning citizens face one less barrier to entering the workforce and providing for their families. Currently, 83% of formerly incarcerated men need financial assistance from their families. Eliminating the box means access to jobs that put ex-offenders on pathways to family economic stability.

If adopted, Oregon would become the 16th state to enact a version of “ban the box” legislation, representing virtually every region of the country. States that have enacted ban-the-box policies include Colorado, Georgia, Nebraska, and New Mexico. Major corporations such as Target and Walmart have also banned the box in their hiring processes.

The bottom line is that it’s in everyone’s best interest when all Oregonians have a fair chance to work with viable pathways out of poverty and into the middle class.

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon strongly supports HB 3025.