

To: Oregon Senate Workforce Committee  
From: Renée LaChance, 4125 SE 63<sup>rd</sup>, Portland, OR 97206  
Re: Ban the Box Legislation, HB 3025  
Date: May 20, 2015

My name is Renée LaChance and I strongly support HB 3025, which will ban the box on employment applications.

Today, I am coming out.

Few people know I was convicted of a felony in 1980 and spent my 21<sup>st</sup> year in a federal prison in California. As a fifth generation Oregonian, being sent to California was punishment enough for my egregious act. Yet, the punishment and shaming continues, 35 years later. The stigma has prevented me from telling anyone but my closest family and friends.

It is my hope that my coming out today and lending my voice to this issue can help someone else as they return to society after incarceration.

After my release from prison I spent the next years fumbling for employment. I felt I had a tattoo on my forehead, big capital letters, FELON. No one wanted to hire a felon in a recession. I became a serial entrepreneur to get by. I was lucky I had an aptitude for business. Others in my situation were forced back to criminal activity to survive.

One of the businesses I founded and managed for 15 years was Just Out, Oregon's lesbian and gay news magazine that published for 30 years and was the foundation for Oregon's gay community.

Being self-employed did not save me from the ramifications of the box. The box prevented me from getting Small Business Administration loans for my business and other economic help normally afforded emerging companies.

Through the decades I periodically sought conventional employment. When I saw the box on an application I knew my honest answer would prevent me from getting an interview so I could get the job. Each time I faced the box I felt punished and shamed.

It is time to embrace reform and stop enabling life sentences for every felony.

Give felons a fair chance. Please vote to Ban the Box by passing HB 3025.

Sincerely,

Renee LaChance