

A FAIR CHANCE FOR ALL

REDUCE BARRIERS: BAN THE BOX

From the Desk of
Sen. Michael Dembrow



TO: Members of the Oregon Senate
FR: The Fair Chance for All Coalition
RE: Stories From Oregonians Highlighting the Urgent Need for HB 3025-B

June 11th, 2015

Below are excerpts from a few select personal stories that were shared in public testimony urging the 2015 Oregon Legislature to act on HB 3025-B and reduce barriers to employment that Oregonians with an arrest or conviction history face each day.

“ I am just like most people in the community, I’m a mother of 2, a grandparent of 5, I love to watch western movies; I cook and sew. I love my family and enjoy my friends.

That hasn’t always been the case. My story, the final chapter of my addiction and criminality ended while sitting in jail October 16, 1989. I bonded out of jail in January 1990 and followed through with the court system for the next year in both Washington and Oregon.

I believed because I paid my bill to society and I was through with the criminal justice system, everything would be all right, until I tried to get a job. Things started going bad. It seemed like I was prosecuted and tried all over for the crimes that I committed, the crimes that I had already paid my debt to society. I was being discriminated against by the employment agency and housing community.

What I have found is that once someone sees the check mark “yes” on the box, that application often put aside and even thrown away.

Today, I work for Mercy Corps NW at the Re-Entry Transition Center. Hundreds of people (with backgrounds) come through our center each month. People come to the center filled with hope. The good news is we get to help some of them-the bad news is more than 400 people come out of prison each month, As a community we need to help folks become successful. They are asking for a hand up-not a hand out. ”

Alverda McCoy • Portland, Oregon

“ My name is Patricia Coldeen. I am presently a student in the University of Oregon’s Family and Human Services program. I have earned an Associates of Arts from Lane Community College and I am a certified due to an untreated drug addiction, I was arrested and in 2007 I finally got the drug treatment I so desperately needed.

I began feeling discouraged when door after door of employment opportunity closed on me, all because of the question on the application; have you ever been convicted of a felony? I knew if I checked that box the application would be discarded. I worked so hard to address my addiction issues, change my thought processes, and change my life and then only to be told I was still not employable. It was difficult at times to persevere. I was one of the lucky ones. With the help and support of family and friends, and many months of not giving up, I was finally able to find an employer that was willing to give me a chance. I have been with them ever since. ”

Patricia Coldeen • Eugene, Oregon

See other side for endorsing organizations

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Endorsing Organizations

AFSCME Council 75
APANO
Basic Rights Oregon
Better People
Bridges to Change
Coalition for a Livable Future
Causa
Constructing Hope
Diamond Law
Elders in Action
Fair Share Research and Education fund
Family Forward Oregon
Hands Across the Bridge
HARRP
Impact NW
In Other Words
Iron Tribe
Jobs with Justice Portland
MACG
Mercy Corp NW
Mother PAC
Multnomah County
NALC Branch 82
NAYA Family Center
NAACP Portland Unit 1120-13
Northwest Oregon Labor Council
Oregon Action
Oregon AFL-CIO
Oregon Cure
Oregon Justice Resource Center
Oregon Opportunity Network
Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc
PAALF
Partnership for Safety and Justice
PCRI
PCUN
PFLAG Portland Black Chapter
PHOENIX Rising
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon
ROAR Alliance
Roofers Union local 49
Rosewood Endowment
SCAFE
SEIU 49
SEIU 503
United Food and Commercial Workers local 555
United Steelworkers, Oregon L&E Committee
Urban League of Portland
Verde Northwest
Voices Set Free
Voz
Washington County Reentry Council
Western States Center
Working Families Party
YWCA of Greater Portland