

STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Rules

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 06/16/15

Action: Do Pass And Requesting Referral To Ways And Means.

Meeting Dates: 06/16

Vote:

Yeas: 5 - Beyer, Boquist, Burdick, Ferrioli, Rosenbaum

Prepared By: Erin Seiler, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes Task Force on Reentry, Employment and Housing. Requires report to Legislative Assembly no later than December 15, 2015. Sunsets Task Force on December 31, 2016. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Barriers to education, employment and housing for individuals released from incarceration
- Ending cycle of recidivism
- Challenges returning to workforce or accessing educational resources
- Resources spent on incarceration; resources spent on reentry
- Balance needs of public and private sector

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

After release from incarceration, offenders are expected to reintegrate into society by obtaining suitable housing, complying with court-ordered payment of debts such as restitution and/or child support in arrears, and supporting themselves, all of which being predicated on their ability to secure gainful employment. Studies have also found that access to housing and employment are among the two most effective ways to reduce recidivism. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), at least 27 states limit or prohibit the use of criminal records for public or private employment and/or licensing eligibility. NCSL also reports that 13 states, plus the District of Columbia, have enacted “Ban the Box” legislation restricting or prohibiting employers from using an applicant’s criminal history in employment consideration, with few exceptions. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex and national origin, does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of criminal history.

Senate Bill 969 establishes the fifteen-member Task Force on Reentry, Employment and Housing (Task Force) to improve the experience of reentry into non-incarcerated daily living for persons with a criminal conviction. The Task Force will discuss ways to expand employment opportunities, provide housing opportunities and create certificates and a certification process for persons with criminal convictions and report to the Legislative Assembly no later than December 15, 2015.