



Oregon Voices
990 Judson SE
Salem, OR 97302

April 5, 2017

RE: SB 690

TO: Senate Judiciary Committee
Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Sen. Kim Thatcher, Vice Chair
Sen. Michael Dembrow

Sen. Dennis Linthicum
Sen. James Manning Jr.


Chairman Prozanski and members of the committee:

I am writing on behalf of Oregon Voices in support of SB 690. I have worked now for about 8 years with a population of people in reentry from incarceration, and I have seen over and over again how difficult it is for people to rebuild their lives when all that many employers and landlords can see is the felony on their record. I have talked and wondered about what might be done to begin to break down these preconceptions that follow people, often for years after their release from prison, even when they have maintained a clean record. The first person I heard talking concretely about the idea of this bill was Justice DeMuniz in a conversation we had over coffee at Willamette several years ago. Since that time, I have hoped to see the legislature attempt to implement something like this bill.

The procedure outlined in SB 680 seems to me to provide a clear and understandable framework for the granting of the certificates along with sufficient safeguards to prevent abuse of the program, and by doing so, it offers one more tool by which responsible persons in reentry can begin to reestablish the trust they forfeited with their crime. It also provides protections for employers who are willing to commit to hiring a person who has successfully earned the certificate of good standing.

Anyone who works with this population becomes painfully aware of the fact that different individuals in reentry often represent widely varying degrees of risk to reoffend, and that some of those people represent no higher risk than the general population. And those whose record demonstrates low risk deserve a chance to move beyond the low expectations that now accompany many of them in every job interview and every meeting with a potential landlord. SB 680 offers a sensible step toward providing that chance. I urge the committee to support this bill.

Sincerely,


Ken Nolley
Oregon Voices