



Oregon Voices  
990 Judson SE  
Salem, OR 97302

May 21, 2017

RE: SB 690

TO: House Judiciary Committee

Rep. Jeff Barker, Chair

Rep. Andy Olsen, Vice Chair

Rep. Jennifer Williamson, Vice Chair

Rep. Chris Gorsek

Rep. Mitch Greenlick

Rep. Ann Lininger

Rep. Bill Post

Rep. Tawna Sanchez

Rep. Sherrie Sprenger

Rep. Duane Stark

Rep. A. Richard Vial

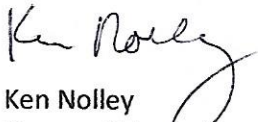
Dear Chair Barker and members of the committee:

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 690 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.

I am not presuming that this bill will cause a miraculous change for the individuals it affects. But I still believe that it has some utility, particularly because the procedures involved in the granting of the certificate goes beyond the subjective opinion of a community corrections supervisor or another acquaintance. Anyone who works with this population becomes painfully aware of the challenges facing individuals in reentry, many of whom are working diligently and with good results on rebuilding a better life. Those people 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 690 offers a small but sensible step toward providing that chance. I urge the committee to support this bill.

Sincerely,

  
Ken Nolley  
Oregon Voices