

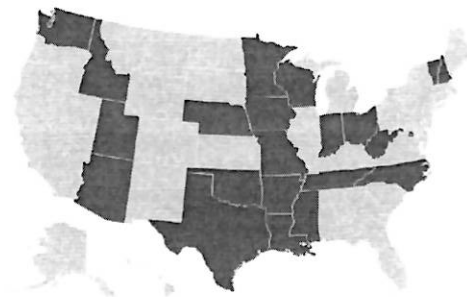
Giving People with Criminal Records a Fresh Start in Licensing in Colorado

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THE PROBLEM

Approximately 1 in 3 Americans have criminal records, which can make it difficult or impossible for people who are rehabilitated to find work, especially in licensed occupations. Colorado licenses approximately 18% of its workforce. Yet, unlike many states, Colorado lacks any formal process for people with criminal records to get a decision from agencies and boards about whether a criminal record will prevent them from getting an occupational license. The state's lack of transparency in licensing makes it harder for people with criminal records to access jobs and for interested employers to hire them. It also undermines public safety by making it more difficult for people to provide for their families and positively contribute to their communities, hindering their chances of successful re-entry.

In 21 states, plus Washington, D.C., ex-offenders can petition a licensing board at any time, including before enrolling in any required training, to determine if their record would be disqualifying. This is not the case in Colorado.



HB 24-1004

- Creates a process for people with criminal records to petition licensing bodies at any point, including before investing in training, for a determination about whether their criminal record is disqualifying.
- Ensures that people are only denied a license when their criminal record "directly relates" to their ability to safely perform the duties of the occupation.
- Requires licensing bodies to give individualized consideration of an applicant with a criminal record, including evidence of rehabilitation, in making their decisions and limits consideration of old and non-violent records.
- Eliminates the use of vague and subjective terms like "good moral character," "moral turpitude," or "character and fitness" to ensure rules are applied evenhandedly.

BENEFITS OF THE REFORM

- **Encourages successful re-entry.** A job is one of the best ways to reduce recidivism. Creating a formal process for people with criminal records to apply for licensed jobs offers them a meaningful opportunity to find work and successfully reintegrate into society.
- **Supports families.** By accessing licensed occupations, people with criminal records who are rehabilitated can also access higher paying jobs and achieve greater economic stability.
- **Increases public safety.** Research shows that states with higher licensing burdens have higher rates of recidivism. Unfortunately, Colorado has a worse recidivism rate than most states.
- **Helps businesses.** Many Colorado businesses are struggling to find workers. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, employers are open to hiring re-entering citizens, but licensing laws stand in their way. Research confirms that formerly incarcerated hires achieve the same or better scores on job performance, dependability, promotion potential, and retention.
- **Encourages entrepreneurship.** Increasing employment opportunities will also encourage more re-entering citizens to start their own businesses.

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