

Washington Fair Chance Coalition



Working to “Ban the Box”

The Washington Fair Chance Act — HB 1298 and SB 5312 — will increase public safety, reduce government spending, and help people become productive members of society by increasing job opportunities for those who have been arrested or convicted of a crime. Having a job is one of the best ways to reduce the chance someone will re-offend. But people with arrest or conviction records are often eliminated from the job applicant pool immediately because they truthfully answer these questions on job applications:

- Have you ever been arrested?*
- Have you ever been convicted of a crime?*

These boxes do not allow job seekers the opportunity to explain the circumstances of a past arrest or conviction, or to discuss their desires to be gainfully employed and leave the past where it belongs — in the past. These boxes also marginalize the skills, qualifications, and expertise that are critical factors for employers to assess in the hiring process. This bill would “ban the box.”

The Fair Chance Act would allow criminal history background checks to be conducted *after* an employer has determined that the applicant is qualified for the position — criminal history background checks could not be used as an *initial* screening tool except for jobs requiring unsupervised contact with vulnerable adults or children, in the financial industry, and in law enforcement. The Act does not interfere with Federal requirements for background checks or with the employer’s right to ask questions about past convictions in a job interview.

A broad spectrum of diverse interests have joined together to support the Washington Fair Chance Act and "ban the box" laws around the country. Supporters include business and labor, faith and human services organizations, Republicans and Democrats, organizations representing communities of color, and organizations located in Eastern and Western Washington.

<http://www.wafairchancecoalition.org/supporters.html>

In order to achieve the goals of obtaining a fair chance for persons with criminal history who are applying for jobs, the act will be enforced by the Attorney General's office. The AG's office will first educate violators about their duties under the law and offer assistance in compliance. For business entities that repeatedly refuse to comply with the law, the AG's office will be authorized to take enforcement action, including monetary penalties.

For more information, contact:

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