

Target Corporation Announces New “Ban the Box” Policy, Setting Example for Large Corporations Across the U.S.

Gives Qualified Job Applicants Who Have Past Convictions a Fair Shot at a Job

Minneapolis, MN—The Minneapolis-based Target Corporation, the nation’s second-largest retailer, announced on Thursday that it will remove questions about criminal history from its job applications in Minnesota and throughout the nation. The move came in response to a new Minnesota law and intense pressure from a grassroots campaign demanding that the company reduce employment barriers faced by people with criminal records.

While 10 states and over 50 cities around the country have enacted “ban the box” policies, eliminating the check-box that asks about an applicant’s criminal record, Target joins a select group of large private employers that have taken steps to end blanket hiring exclusions that make it nearly impossible for anyone with a criminal record to get a job.

“Target is finally doing the right thing by reforming its hiring policies so that qualified job applicants aren’t automatically screened out simply because they have an arrest or conviction from the past,” said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project**. “Other large retailers around the nation need to follow suit, because their hiring policies send a strong message about whether they are committed to the communities that support their business.”

Earlier this year, Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton signed a law expanding the state’s ban-the-box policy to cover private employers. Starting January 1, 2014, all employers in Minnesota will be required to wait until a job applicant has been selected for an interview or a given a conditional offer of employment before asking the applicant about her criminal history or conducting a criminal background check.

At a community forum hosted by TakeAction Minnesota on Thursday night, Target’s Vice President of Employee and Labor Relations, Jim Rowader, announced that Target would not only comply with the Minnesota law for job applicants within the state but would “ban the box” from all Target job applications around the country. TakeAction Minnesota led a three-year campaign against Target, which included demonstrations, the filing of 10 civil rights complaints with the EEOC, and extensive engagement with Target executives.

“The Council on Crime and Justice and other members of the Minnesota Second Chance Coalition worked tirelessly to pass statewide ban-the-box legislation. Not only is Target complying with the new law here, they are doing the right thing around the country by giving people the opportunity to be judged for their skills and qualifications first,” said Mark Haase, vice president at the Council on Crime and Justice, based in Minneapolis.

“We commend Target for taking this important step in fair hiring and are excited about our partnership with them to provide opportunities to our community members.”

“There are solutions to making sure those individuals with criminal histories in their past—the vast majority non-violent misdemeanors—are given a fair opportunity to be hired. It’s about all of us working together to remove the barriers and narrow this employment gap—corporate employers, policymakers and our community-at-large,” said Justin Terrell, program manager of TakeAction Minnesota’s Justice 4 All campaign.

Target’s stated policy is consistent with best practices identified by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in its May 2012 guidance to employers. The guidance urges employers to limit discrimination against people of color that result from the vast expansion of criminal background checks for employment.

The National Employment Law Project is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts research and advocates on issues affecting low-wage and unemployed workers. For more about NELP, visit www.nelp.org.

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