GOVERNOR BROWN, SIGN AB218 AND INCREASE PUBLIC SAFETY BY CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS

A critical piece of legislation is on Governor Jerry Brown’s desk (AB218) that, if signed, would go a long way to help give people with a criminal record – one in four adults in California – a fair shot at a job without in any way compromising safety and security at the workplace.

The bill would require public sector employers to remove the dreaded job application question that asks about an individual’s criminal record, but it allows employers to conduct a background check later in the hiring process after an individual has had a chance to prove his or her job qualifications.

Nine states other than California have adopted similar protections, including three just in the past year, along with 50 cities and counties across the U.S. It’s a reform whose time has come in California, as reinforced by the many diverse voices that have strongly endorsed the measure across the state.

EDITORIAL BOARDS

The Los Angeles Times
“To Help Ex-Cons, Ban the Box,” July 3, 2013
“The most telling predictor of whether an ex-offender will reenter the community as a law-abiding and productive member, or whether instead he or she will return to jail or prison, is employment. Former inmates with steady jobs have fairly high success rates. For those who can’t find work, prospects are dismal . . . . There is a growing movement nationwide to ‘ban the box’ from employment applications and end discrimination against people who have spent time behind bars. It is time for California to join the movement, cautiously but deliberately . . . . AB218 makes sense and deserves to become law. For public employers, at the earliest stage of the job application process, it’s time to ban the box.”

AB218 has also been endorsed by the editorial boards of the Sacramento Bee (“Clarifying Our Position on Criminal Background Check Boxes,” September 10, 2013) and the New York Times (“An Unfair Barrier to Employment,” May 5, 2013)

PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Mayor Eric Garcetti, Los Angeles
“AB218 would help people with convictions become employed and successfully reintegrate into the community. As we have done in Los Angeles, this bill will allow people with a conviction history get a foot in the door without compromising safety and security.” (Support Letter, August 8, 2013)
Mayor Edwin M. Lee, San Francisco
“We know from our own experience that allowing people with a conviction history to compete fairly for employment will not compromise safety and security in the workplace. Indeed, it can reduce recidivism and promote public safety. I am very pleased to support this bill.” (Support Letter, July 17, 2013)

LAW ENFORCEMENT
Chief of Police Chris Magnus, City of Richmond
“I strongly support AB218, which will help reduce recidivism and provide members of the Richmond community and other residents of California the opportunity to compete for jobs. This legislation promotes public safety by reducing unnecessary job barriers for the nearly seven million adult Californians with a criminal record.” (Support Letter, March 4, 2013)

District Attorney George Gascon, City and County of San Francisco
“Public sector employers in California have a special obligation to pave the way for the private sector to reduce barriers to employment of people with criminal records. For these reasons, I support AB218.” (Support Letter, March 22, 2013)

CLERGY
Father Gregory Boyle (Founder and Executive Director of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles) and Reverend Joseph Clopton (of Sacramento Area Congregations Together)
“It’s not just about fairness for people with criminal records – it’s also good for California’s economy and for the safety of our communities to ensure we’re maximizing job opportunities for everyone.” (Op-ed, “Fair Hiring Policy Gets an Unfair Rap,” Sacramento Bee, September 10, 2013)

HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS
Jody Pollak, Alameda County Labor Relations Analyst
“[T]here has been no negative or adverse consequences since we made this change back in 2007. The feedback that we’ve received has been overwhelmingly positive. In fact what we hear from members of the community is that they are far more likely to apply for a position with Alameda County based on this change that we made . . . . [W]e’ve been able to expand our pool of qualified applicants as a result of this change in our application process, which has been a tremendous benefit to the County.” Testimony before the California Senate Labor Committee (June 26, 2013)

LABOR UNIONS
California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
“As California moves toward realignment, and there is a shift from incarceration to community release and supervision, it is essential that we get real about rehabilitation. The public sector should be a model of opportunity for the rest of California’s employers.” (Support Letter, March 28, 2013)