



Minneapolis
City of Lakes

City Council

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March 16, 2009

The Honorable Mee Moua
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Capitol Building, Room 120
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Dear Senator Moua:

I write in support of S.F. No 538, regarding consideration of an individual's criminal history for the purposes of public employment. I regret I cannot present my testimony in person.

In the City of Minneapolis, we are proud to say the door is open just a little bit wider for an individual with a criminal record to become employed by the City. In 2006, Councilmember Don Samuels and I met with the Council on Crime and Justice and our City's Human Resources Department to discuss a change to our hiring practices that would remove from our city application form the box requiring disclosure of past criminal history. This change was approved in December 2006 by a unanimous Council, with the support of the Mayor and the support of our HR department. Under our Fair Hiring Practices resolution background checks, which are required for approximately two-thirds of city jobs, are performed **only after** a conditional job offer has been made.

At the time we adopted this policy, we thought this was a change that would improve quality of life for individuals with a criminal record and help ensure that they did not return to a life of crime. We believed this change would strengthen our communities, sending a loud and clear message to those trying to live productive lives after time behind bars that "we want you to succeed!"

Today I can confirm that, based on two years of results, this decision has benefitted city government and residents with a criminal background. Here are some highlights:

- **Fewer applicants are being rejected due to a criminal conviction.**
- **Our new hiring practice has *not* increased costs to the City of Minneapolis.** Considering criminal conviction information at the time of a job offer has decreased the amount of transactional work for staff
- **The hiring process has not slowed down** by our new practice of reviewing convictions at the job offer stage.

March 16, 2009

Page 2

This bill you are considering will provide positive change for many people who are trying to do the right thing: become productive members of our communities. From the perspective of the City of Minneapolis, we are pleased with how our Fair Hiring Practices Resolution has impacted our hiring practices and given more opportunity and hope to individuals with a criminal record.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Glidden". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "E" and "G".

Elizabeth Glidden

EAG/jbw

Encl.

City of Minneapolis Conviction Information Summary 2004 – 2008 YTD

What Has Changed Since 2006:

- City Council adopted the Fair Hiring Practices Resolution 2006R0642 on December 22, 2006.
- The City removed the criminal conviction disclosure box from its employment application on January 30, 2007.
- Revised Background Check Policy went into effect January 1, 2008. Highlights of the policy revisions include:
 - Expanded criteria for which positions would require a background check.
 - Expanded to include credentials check (education, licensure, etc).
 - Specifies that background checks are to be done at the time a conditional job offer has been made

Applicant Summary	2004-2006	2007-July 3, 2008
Applications Received – City Positions Only	18,842	12,911
# of Background Checks Conducted ¹	996	494
% of Checks to Applications Received	5.3%	3.8%
# of Background Checks with Conviction Concerns (within the preceding 7 years) ²	N/A	47
% of Background Checks with Conviction Concerns		9.5%
# of Applicants with Concerns – Hired	57 (5.7%) ³	27 (57.4%)
# of Applicants Rejected Prior to an Eligible List Being Established	51 (5.1%)	None ⁴
# of Applicants Rejected for not responding to conviction letter	41 (4.1%)	1 (2.1%)
# of Applicants Rejected due to the nature of the conviction (post-certification) ⁵	2 (.2%)	13 (27.7%)

¹ 2004-2006 reflects the number of applicant-disclosed convictions for permanent hires, not the number of background checks conducted through a third-party vendor. 2007-2008 reflects the number of background checks conducted through a third-party vendor for all applicable details, temporary and permanent hires.

² For 2004-2006, all disclosed conviction information was reviewed. There is no specific data available for how many of those disclosures had “concerns”.

³ Percentages are the ratio of applicant status to the number of background checks conducted (2004-2007), or to the number of checks with concerns (2007-2008).

⁴ As of 1/30/07, background checks are only conducted after a conditional job offer had been made.

⁵ 2004-2006 numbers are lower as rejections were typically done prior to certification. 2007-2008 rejection percentages are higher as it is compared only to the number of checks with a concern (47).

Key Learnings:

- Fewer applicants are being rejected due to a criminal conviction.
- More than half of the applicants with a criminal conviction marked as a “concern” were hired.
- Considering criminal conviction information at the time of a job offer has decreased the amount of transactional work for staff.
- Reviewing convictions with a concern at the job offer stage has not slowed down the hiring process. However, having to review conviction information at the job offer stage makes it more obvious to the hiring manager that there is a potential issue with that applicant.