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TOPEKA, KS – Governor Jeff Colyer today issued Executive Order 18-12 regarding state employment practices. The order instructs all Executive Branch departments, agencies, boards, and commissions under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Governor to ensure that job applicants are not asked about their criminal record during the initial stage of a state employment application.

“Studies have shown that gainful employment is a major factor in reducing recidivism rate among former offenders,” said Gov. Colyer. “This is simply about treating people as individuals and allowing them to explain their circumstances at a later point in the process”.

The executive order notes that individuals with criminal records often experience obstacles when trying to rejoin society, such as the practice of automatically disqualifying those with criminal records from consideration. The ‘Ban the Box’ initiative, which has been adopted in numerous other states, allows applicants to explain their unique facts and circumstances to potential employers while still allowing employers to enquire about criminal background in later stages of the process.

The order does not prevent employers from conducting criminal background checks or from excluding such applicants if a law or regulation prohibits those with criminal records from holding that specific position.

Studies show that recidivism rates fall substantially when ex-offenders achieve gainful employment. Many other states have adopted policies revising their state employment practices to lower the barriers to individuals with criminal histories seeking to enter the state workforce, including more than 30 that have adopted some form of “Ban the Box” policy. The national “Ban the Box” initiative has brought renewed attention to the value of discussing applicants’ criminal history later in the hiring process and providing applicants with an opportunity to explain their unique facts and circumstances to potential employers.

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