

## Gov. Snyder: State government is going 'Outside the Box'



Friday, Sept. 7, 2018

### *Governor directs departments to eradicate felony question prior to occupational licensing, state job applications*



LANSING, Mich. – Gov. Rick Snyder today announced the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) has removed the checkbox reading “Were you convicted of a felony?” that precedes occupational and construction code licensing applications. The Governor today also signed an executive directive instructing all state departments and agencies to remove the felony question box that precedes job applications on NEOGOV, the website through which residents can apply for state employment. The felony conviction box will be replaced with an affirmation of good character statement, similar to what will be used on licensing applications.



The governor is encouraging private employers to follow suit, by removing the felony box from job applications, or “moving the box” to later in the hiring process. Several Michigan companies large and small have already taken this approach and boast of great success in hiring former offenders.

“The continuation of Michigan’s comeback depends on all populations and communities being part of our success,” Gov. Rick Snyder said. “We have to keep working to reduce barriers to employment, and by modernizing our system to move outside the box, we can offer second chances to many residents who are ready to work and already trained for the exact jobs that employers are desperate to fill.”

“Especially with our current shortage of skilled trades professionals, it’s imperative we work to incorporate as many people as possible into our labor force.”

Lt. Gov. Brian Calley said: “Michigan’s recidivism rate has never been lower, but there is so much more that we can do. The Department of Corrections has led the start of this cultural change in our state.

“We have great employers in Michigan who already recognize the advantage of giving people a second chance in the workforce and have seen great results because of it. Today’s announcement builds on this work by reducing obstacles to occupational licensing which will lead to a larger workforce and stronger communities all across the state.”

Kimberly Buddin, Policy Counsel at the ACLU of Michigan, said: “This is an important step in ending unfair and unnecessary practices that have excluded thousands of willing, able, and motivated individuals from gaining employment and licenses. Policies and practices like this benefit communities and employers alike. We hope Michigan’s leadership will continue to adopt additional comprehensive policies that further dismantle barriers to self-sufficiency for returning citizens.”

“Being employed is a critical factor in deterring people from criminal activity and empowers them to become contributing members of society,” said Jarrett Skorup of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. “These latest reforms announced by Gov. Snyder will increase job opportunities for Michigan citizens who need them most, a positive step in the right direction for both workforce development and our criminal justice system. Research from other states shows that these changes will increase economic opportunity and enhance public safety by encouraging dignified work.”

Additionally, LARA and the Michigan Department of Corrections signed a memorandum of Understanding allowing MDOC to determine if a **Vocational Village** candidate meets good moral character licensing determination, before going through the program. The removal of the felony question from the licensing process will allow for other trades to be taught at the Vocational Village, while LARA will ensure that the applicant meets all other license criteria. This gives former offenders certainty that if they are trained for a certain skill or occupation, they will be eligible to be licensed for it.



LARA will also work with the state Legislature on strategies to reexamine and modernize requirements for health care licensing. In some health professions, there are bans on hiring workers with criminal convictions also imposed by federal law. LARA will also work with municipalities on 'Outside the Box' policies, as several cities in Michigan have licensing requirements, in addition to state level licensing standards.

Gov. Snyder last year also signed **PA 191 of 2017**, removing the prohibition on MDOC hiring formerly convicted felons.

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Outside the box executive directive 

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