



Ban the Box, Stepping Up initiatives passed by BOS

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The Pima County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 Tuesday to remove the criminal conviction history check box from Pima County job applications and delay any necessary background check until later in the hiring process.

The County joined 18 states, the City of Tucson and more than 100 other cities and counties in adopting a "Ban the Box" policy, recognizing that a job candidate's qualifications ought to be considered first in most cases, rather than allowing past convictions to automatically block employment. The Board resolution directed the County Human Resources Department to determine which positions would still require background checks because of their work with vulnerable populations or their safety-sensitive nature and develop such procedures as needed to implement the policy and conduct appropriate background checks.

The Board also voted 5-0 to support a national effort called "Stepping Up: A National Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jail." Participants are collecting data, examining treatment options and developing plans to reduce the incarceration of people with mental and co-occurring substance abuse disorders.

Both the Ban the Box and the Stepping Up initiatives are part of Pima County's on-going efforts to end poverty and reduce the impacts associated with incarceration and recidivism. The inability of people with criminal histories to get jobs contributes to poverty, recidivism and increased crime.

"The Ban the Box and Stepping Up initiatives are crucial to our continuing efforts to improve the lives of those dealing with economic instability and other challenging obstacles. I'm pleased the Board passed these," said County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry.

Pima County District Five Supervisor Richard Elías was also pleased with the passing of the initiatives.

"Poverty shouldn't define us, and neither should a criminal record or mental illness," Supervisor Richard Elías said. "These reforms will get our lowest-risk criminals out of detention and give a fair chance to those looking to provide for their families."

The County is currently part of the Safety and Justice Challenge, sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation, to find ways to safely reduce jail incarceration—particularly the disproportionate incarceration of low-income individuals, people of color and the mentally ill.