



Testimony of Eric W. Gjede
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Before the Committee on Labor and Public Employees
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Testifying on HB 5237
AN ACT CONCERNING FAIR CHANCE EMPLOYMENT

Good afternoon Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, Senator Hwang, Representative Rutigliano and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am assistant counsel at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), which represents more than 10,000 large and small companies throughout the state of Connecticut.

CBIA has concerns regarding HB 5237, but we wish to reiterate our willingness to work with the committee on this issue.

Criminal background checks are a legitimate way for businesses, particularly small businesses, to screen employment applicants. In fact, there are at least four bills (HB 5466, HB 5412, HB 5400 & HB 5306) proposed this session that preserve and expand the state's and municipalities' ability to use these background checks. However, we also understand and support individuals that have learned from their experiences and wish to reenter the workforce.

We do have concerns about HB 5237, a few of which I will list below:

1. The proposed look back period of 5 years for felonies and 2 years for misdemeanors is relatively short. The standard industry practice is a look back period of 7 to 10 years.
2. The financial penalty for a violation of this section proposed in (k) is extremely high, especially given that some violations are inadvertent and as a result of databases controlled by the state that are not up to date.
3. This bill does not include language that supersedes the few Connecticut municipalities that already have ban the box laws. Uniformity in these laws are critical for businesses – particularly those businesses with multiple locations.

Thank you for allowing us to testify on HB 5237. We look forward to continuing to work with the committee on this issue.