



Testimony of Eric Gjede
Vice President of Government Affairs, CBIA
Before the Labor & Public Employees Committee
Hartford, CT
March 11, 2021

**Testifying in support of
HB 6596: AN ACT CONCERNING MANAGER SALARIES AND OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING REGULATION**

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Sampson, Representative Arora and members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am the vice president of government affairs for CBIA, the Connecticut Business & Industry Association. CBIA is Connecticut's largest business organization, with thousands of member companies, small and large, representing a diverse range of industries from across the state. Ninety-five percent of our member companies are small businesses with less than 100 employees.

CBIA supports HB 6596.

CBIA supports effective reentry initiatives that help people secure employment when returning to their community. Such constructive public policy, however, needs to be balanced with reasonable protections that address the valid concerns of employers. We believe HB 6596 has that balance.

HB 6595 removes blanket prohibitions within the general statutes that prevent individuals from obtaining a professional license if they have a criminal history, regardless of whether their history is in any way related to the license they are seeking to obtain. If the past criminal history is relevant to the professional license being obtained, that individual would not be eligible for the license.

This is a sensible policy that will help remove barriers preventing individuals with criminal backgrounds from obtaining meaningful employment. An individual that has been successfully rehabilitated should be free to seek a professional license. This effort demonstrates a commitment to putting past mistakes behind them. While obtaining a professional license is a good step, CBIA also supports HB 6596 because, unlike HB 6474, it does not discourage conversations about one's criminal history at the risk of a claim for discriminatory hiring practices. An employer and an applicant with a criminal history can still have an open conversation about the history at the appropriate time under law.

Further, unlike HB 6474, HB 6596 creates opportunities for individuals with a criminal history. If an individual is not prevented from obtaining a professional license solely due to that history, they have the option to start their own business in their chosen profession.

HB 6596 does not require the business community to ignore the fact that some individuals have criminal history, nor does it require us to incur legal risk every time we choose to hire or not hire an individual with a history.

HB 6596 is balanced policy that provides real opportunities for those attempting to reintegrate into society. CBIA is happy to lend its support to this legislation.

CBIA SUPPORT OF EFFECTIVE REENTRY PROGRAMS

CBIA (along with other business entities and other non-profit organizations, including CT Legal Services and the ACLU) has been working with the CT Department of Corrections, to examine and identify barriers to employment for individuals who are reentering their communities with criminal records and find ways to eliminate those obstacles and open opportunities to meaningful employment.

CBIA staff were recognized for their workforce efforts with returning citizens.

<https://www.cbiam.com/news/workforce-development/cbiam-workforce-development-recognition/>

One of the many steps we are actively taking is to develop guidance and training for employers on the recruitment, hiring and retention process for people with criminal records. As part of this effort, CBIA helps employers apply individualized assessments to their hiring process required by current EEOC guidelines. CBIA is using its unique position in the business community to help employers recognize that they can meet their need for qualified workers by adopting practices and policies that help them comply with federal and state laws, put risk and liability in perspective and avoid rejecting good applicants who have criminal records.

CBIA generally supports effective reentry efforts and will continue to work with other parties on developing and implementing such initiatives.