

BAN THE BOX - 2/23/15

SUE BETTE / MAIN STREET ALLIANCE

Hello. My name is Sue Bette and I am the owner of Bluebird Barbecue in Burlington, Vermont and I am also a Board Member at the Main Street Alliance of Vermont.

Thank you for welcoming me and for the opportunity to speak today. To begin I would like to share that my perspective is that of a Vermont small business owner and Vermont community member.

As an employer I know that it is critical to hire individuals who are able to not only fulfill job responsibilities but also contribute to a healthy team atmosphere. Ban the box does not create a way to hide a criminal record and does not prevent employers from conducting a background check - It just gives applicants the opportunity to interview and share their story without being eliminated automatically based on prior criminal convictions.

During my seven years of owning a business in Vermont I have employed community members who have a criminal record. In working with these individuals I have witnessed the difficulties of recovering from this past. I have seen the challenges of balancing a healthy recovery, managing work, life, finances and family obligations.

I support H.261 because I believe that this policy change will assist in creating a path to success for those who have served their sentence and have earned an opportunity for recovery and to pursue new dreams.

Once a sentence has been served there is no need to create a 'life sentence' that prevents future growth and opportunity. I believe that in order to create a strong, vibrant, and healthy Vermont community it is necessary to create a path of success for this population to again contribute to our economy and rebuild their lives in a healthy and constructive way.

Thank you.