

March 30, 2016
Testimony in Support of H.261

To: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs
From: Jason Aprea, Co-Owner of BBetter Inc. in Brattleboro

My wife and I have co-owned a gym and personal training facility in Southern Vermont for three years. Our combined experience and success in the health and fitness sector paired with our highly personalized consulting allows us to cultivate lasting relationships with clients to help them achieve their goals and better their health and overall wellbeing.

Part of my decision to start a business came from my difficulties finding employment post-incarceration. At the age of seventeen, I was convicted of a crime and spent some time in jail. After being released, I had a difficult time finding a job and couldn't even get past the initial application to get an interview. Most applications required me to check a box indicating that I had been previously convicted of a crime, and I attribute my checking this box to the lack of call-backs from these establishments.

My inability to get a job made it incredibly difficult to get back on my feet and readjust to life post-incarceration. I know there has been movement in Vermont and across the nation to enact legislation to address this issue and prohibit employers from asking applicants about criminal conviction history on an initial application. I strongly believe that a criminal history shouldn't dictate a person's future success and ability to find employment. Readjusting to life post-incarceration already poses many challenges for individuals and families. If we can begin to remove some of the barriers to reemployment, such as conviction disclosure boxes on applications, we will be taking a step forward in alleviating some of the discrimination that exists for individuals with criminal history and ensuring that everyone has a fair chance at employment. I support H.261 and hope to see it become law this year.

Thank you,
Jason Aprea

Co-Owner of BBetter Inc. in Brattleboro