

March 30, 2016
Testimony in Support of H.261

To: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs
From: Sue Bette, Owner of Bluebird Barbecue in Burlington

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

I appreciate the opportunity to write to this committee in support of H.261. To begin, I would like to share that my perspective is that of both 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. H.261 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 to success for this population to again contribute to our economy and rebuild their lives in a healthy and constructive way.

Thank you,
Sue Bette
Owner of Bluebird Barbecue in Burlington