



To: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
From: Community Justice Network of Vermont (CJNVT)
Date: March 30, 2016
Re: H. 261 - An act relating to criminal record inquiries by an employer

Memo of Support

The Community Justice Network of Vermont (CJNVT) is supportive of H. 261 and the provision in the bill that prohibits employers from requesting criminal history record information on its initial employee application form.

The CJNVT member organizations have provided re-entry services in Vermont for more than 10 years, supporting individuals released from prison to access support services related to employment, housing, and mentoring. These services involve many community members, towns and cities in Vermont, and operate in partnership with the Department of Corrections. Research conducted at the University of Vermont suggests these programs represent one of the most effective ways to increase public safety, reduce recidivism, and promote post prison community reintegration.

A significant challenge for those returning to their communities from prison is obtaining employment. If passed, this bill would result in Vermont joining 13 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 100 cities and counties to date that prevent employers from asking about prior criminal history on initial job applications. While an employer may still inquire as to an applicant's criminal history record during an interview or thereafter, CJNVT believes those returning from prison will have more opportunities to obtain a job, better reintegrate into their community, and live a crime-free life if question related to criminal history occur only after they have been deemed otherwise qualified for a position.