



**Testimony of Kimberly McCullough, Legislative Director
In Support of HB 3025
House Committee On Business and Labor
March 25, 2015**

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in support of HB 3025.

The ACLU of Oregon strongly supports HB 3025, which helps to remove roadblocks to employment for formerly incarcerated individuals. As one of the many collateral consequences of criminal convictions, after serving their debt to society, many ex-offenders are denied the opportunity to work based solely on their conviction. This makes it difficult if not impossible for individuals with a criminal record to re-enter society successfully and be able to earn a living. Particularly in this tough economic climate, the Oregon legislature should pass this law and lead the way in helping ex-offenders to succeed as law-abiding, taxpaying citizens.

In addition, people of color are disproportionately caught up in our criminal justice system, and thus are disproportionately harmed by employers' criminal background check procedures, such as the inclusion of criminal history background boxes on employment applications, disqualification from employment when a past conviction is not directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the position, and disqualification from employment without the opportunity to provide evidence that the individual has reformed their life. This bill is a modest step toward remedying the long-term consequences of a criminal justice system that disproportionately harms people of color.

Finally, HB 3025 will help make our communities safer. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), more than 650,000 individuals are released from prison every year.¹ To reduce the recidivism rate for these individuals, the DOJ has identified three key elements to successful re-entry into our communities. One of these key elements is helping these individuals find and keep a job. Banning the box will better ensure that these individuals have an honest shot at finding employment. It's a first step toward realizing this key element to reducing recidivism and making our communities safer.

If the Oregon legislature passes this bill, it will join a growing number of states and municipalities to do so. As of November of 2014, 13 states and 70 cities had adopted some form of "ban the box" legislation over the prior four years.

HB 3025 is a win-win. It will make Oregon communities safer and give people a second chance to make an honest living. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

¹ http://www.justice.gov/archive/fbci/progmenu_reentry.html