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Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) Works with Key Legislators on “Jobs Bill” to Help Businesses and People with Past Convictions Find Employment

Occupational Licensing Reform Legislation introduced by State Senator Keith Perry and State Representative Spencer Roach is a win-win for employers and employees.

ORLANDO, FL — January 13, 2022 Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) is working with key elected leaders on legislation that was recently filed by State Senator Keith Perry (R-Gainesville) and State Representative Spencer Roach (R-Fort Myers). The legislation will remove barriers to employment for returning citizens (people with past convictions) and make it easier for businesses to fill job openings.

People with criminal records and convictions face a lifetime of barriers finding employment. One in 4 jobs in Florida requires applicants to have an occupational license. In most cases, people with past convictions can be denied a job license simply for having a record and/or have to wait 5 years before they are eligible for a license, even if their record has nothing to do with the work they’re striving to do.

FRRC believes helping people find employment is not only good for the individual, but good for local businesses and the overall community. Data show that formerly incarcerated individuals who find a job are 3 times less likely to reoffend than those who are not able to find employment.

“Our entire society benefits when people with past convictions are able to find meaningful employment,” said Desmond Meade, Executive Director, Florida Rights Restoration Coalition. “Tearing down barriers to employment is not only a win for returning citizens and our families, but for employers and the entire community as well. It is a win-win.”

Returning citizens can help advance the economic recovery, which has been struggling through a labor shortage. The pandemic has caused a huge demand for workers, and employers across the nation are struggling to fill open positions. Returning citizens make up an often overlooked talent pool of millions of Americans: about 1 in 3 people have a criminal record.

Implementing this win-win outcome is why State Senator Keith Perry (R-Gainesville) filed SB 1548 on January 5, 2022, and State Representative Roach (R-Fort Myers) filed HB 1259 on January 6, 2022.

“SB 1548 is about expanding opportunities for those with a criminal history. Increasing education and employment opportunities is directly linked to lowering recidivism rates. Additionally, this bill will expand the size of our workforce, which is essential as we tackle the hiring crisis left over from the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Senator Keith Perry.

State Rep. Spencer Roach added, “The best social welfare program ever created is a job. Once a citizen has paid their debt to society, they should not be placed at a competitive disadvantage from entering the workforce. This bill will eliminate regulatory burdens that prevent or delay returning citizens from being productive members of society once again. This is a common-sense approach that is good for society, good for our economy, and good for Florida.”

Both bills would prohibit occupational licensing boards in Florida from denying an application simply because of a person’s conviction. Under the legislation, denials could only be given if certain job-specific conditions are met, and a license could not be denied due to an applicant’s record if the person can show rehabilitation and ability to perform the job.

The legislation is expected to be heard during Florida's legislative session. If a final bill is passed, it would go into effect on July 1, 2022.

"This moment is an opportunity to help make lives better and improve communities all across our state, said Neil Volz, Deputy Director, Florida Rights Restoration Coalition. "Removing barriers for businesses to hire returning citizens is good for our economy and our state. We hope to see this legislation signed into law."

About the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition

FRRC is a grassroots, membership organization run primarily by returning citizens (formerly convicted persons) who are dedicated to ending the disenfranchisement and discrimination against people with convictions and creating a more comprehensive and humane reentry system that will enhance successful reentry, reduce recidivism, and increase public safety. For more information, visit <https://floridarrc.com/>.

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