

ESHB 1651  
(Kagi)

SB 6469  
(Hargrove)

When barred from important opportunities, youth can become trapped in a cycle of poverty and homelessness.

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*Actual email in support of bill:*

*"I am a former foster child who aged out of care in 2010.*

*I am currently homeless, without employment and without education.*

*I am running into problems getting a job due to a juvenile court record.*

*I had a felony at the age of 14 and have fines in the amount of \$750.*

*If I can't seal my record, I can't get a job. If I can't get a job, I can't get a home. If I can't get a home, I can't pay for a GED.*

*I need your help."*

# YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES ACT

REMOVING BARRIERS FOR REHABILITATED YOUTH - UNANIMOUSLY PASSED THE HOUSE IN 2013

The Washington State juvenile justice system is about rehabilitation. Society and our economy benefit when rehabilitated youth reintegrate into society and become law-abiding, tax-paying members of their communities. A major barrier to reintegration is the widespread dissemination and easy public access to generally non-serious juvenile offense records in our state.

## Washington's Current Policies Prevent Youth from Reintegrating into Society:

- Having a public juvenile offense record can prevent youth from obtaining education, employment, and housing - leading to a **cycle of poverty, homelessness, and crime**.
- Washington is **one of only eight states** where juvenile records are open and published online. As a result, **Washington's youth are at a direct disadvantage compared to youth from other states**.
- Our current records policies have a **discriminatory impact on minority youth**.

## The Youth Opportunities Act Will Diminish this Barrier to Success, While Promoting Public Safety and Government Accountability By:

- Making juvenile offense records confidential, **EXCEPT** for the records of a youth that was adjudicated of any serious violent offenses or a sexual offense.
- Continuing to allow complete access to all records by courts, prosecutors, and law enforcement.
- Continuing to keep juvenile court proceedings open to the public, which ensures justice is being administered fairly and openly.
- Continuing to allow access to records for research and statistical purposes, which ensures that the public can keep our courts and state accountable, fair, and just.

## The Youth Opportunities Act Will Give Our State's Youth a Chance at Success

- It allows youth to pursue educational, employment, and other opportunities without being held back by childhood mistakes.
- It benefits society by promoting employment for Washington's youth, enabling them to contribute to the economy.
- In 2013, the House voted ESHB 1651 out **unanimously**, emphasizing that it strikes the appropriate balance between rehabilitation and public safety.

