



HB 1553: CERTIFICATE OF RESTORATION OF OPPORTUNITY

Employment is a key component of successful reentry and reduced recidivism.

Problem:

Almost 8,000 people are released from prison in Washington each year and over 25,000 people are on community supervision. As many as 1 in 5 people in Washington have a criminal record. Many are ineligible for employment opportunities even if they are qualified and have completed or are in compliance with their sentence and live a law abiding life. **There are over 90 career paths that may be closed to people reentering society.** These occupations range from commercial fishing to substance abuse counselor to barber to telephone solicitor.

Solution:

Provide a process for people to demonstrate to a court that they are now law abiding citizens and have completed or are in compliance with their sentence. If a qualified person can show this, the judge would then sign a Certificate of Restoration of Opportunity (CROP). Those who obtain a CROP would no longer be automatically disqualified for most occupational licenses. A CROP would **not** restore fire arms rights or remove a criminal record from public view.

A CROP would:

- Build safer and healthier communities through increased employment opportunities and reduced recidivism.
- Provide an opportunity to overcome occupational disqualifications.
- Provide employers, housing providers and state licensing agencies verified information about an applicant's good standing.

Ten other states have a similar process - AZ, CA, CT, HI, IL, IA, NJ, NY, NC, and OH.

Supporters: Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, Washington Superior Court Judges Association, Union Gospel Mission, Partners for our Children, Rental Housing Association, Pioneer Human Services, Statewide Poverty Action Network, Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness, Center for Justice, Post-Prison Education Program, Greater Seattle Business Association, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, King County Bar Association, and more.

For more information contact Merf Ehman at merf.ehman@columbialegal.org or Melissa Lee at melissa.lee@columbialegal.org.

