

AB 2138 (Chiu): Fair Chance for Occupational Licensing

Revised 9/18/2020

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1. What is an occupational license?

Certain professions or jobs require a government issued license, clearance, exemption, registration, or regulation* in order to be allowed to do the job. These rules are intended to protect the public and safety but can be overly restrictive and create more barriers for people who want to work in these jobs.

Some examples of jobs that require a license are: real estate agents, security guards, barbers, hair stylists, home health aides, caregivers, psychologists, insurance agents, cosmetologists, nurses, doctors, lawyers, paramedics, massage therapists, clinical social workers, and **many more**.

**License is used as a catchall phrase for government oversight and regulation in this flyer.*

2. What does California Assembly Bill 2138 (AB 2138) do? When does it go into effect?

AB 2138 changes the law about how criminal records can be considered and gives formerly incarcerated people a fair chance at applying for licensure with Boards* that must follow Business and Professions Code § 480 (including **most** Boards under the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA)). *This flyer discusses the impact of AB 2138 on applicants for licensure only.*

Governor Brown signed AB 2138 in September 2018 and **AB 2138 is effective as of July 1, 2020.**

**Board is used interchangeably with Agency, Bureau, Commission, Department, etc. in this flyer.*

3. Does AB 2138 apply to all occupational licenses?

No, AB 2138 only applies to **Boards that follow Business and Professions Code § 480** including **most** Boards under DCA*. The DCA is the largest oversight Department and regulates almost 40 different Boards. For a list of DCA regulated Boards, please visit https://www.dca.ca.gov/about_us/entities.shtml.

**AB 2138 does not modify existing law for these 3 Boards under DCA: (1) Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education, (2) State Athletic Commission, and (3) the California Horse Racing Board¹.*

4. I have a criminal record. What should I do if I am interested in applying for occupational licensure?

First, clear your eligible criminal history by getting Penal Code §§ 1203.4, 1203.4a, 1203.41, or 1203.42 dismissals (commonly called “expungement”) or other record clearance. Please see this list of providers: <https://ebclc.org/reentry-legal-services/> for services in the **county where you have criminal history**.

Second, discuss your employment goals with a competent attorney who is familiar with occupational licensing requirements and criminal law to determine if you can eventually work in the profession. You may not want to spend time and money for education or training if you ultimately cannot work in the job.

Third, once you have consulted with an attorney about your employment goals, complete all the education requirements for the license and apply. See page 4 for a list of organizations.

¹ Assem. Bill 2138, 2017-2018 Reg. Sess., ch. 995, 2018 Cal. Stat.

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5. When should I apply for licensure?

AB 2138 goes into effect on July 1, 2020. If you have criminal history, AB 2138 protections will apply **after July 1, 2020** for Boards that follow Business and Professions Code § 480.

If you are applying to a Board that is unaffected by AB 2138, such as the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Department of Insurance (DOI), or other Boards, there has been no change in law affecting how these Boards review criminal history information. Please see number 4 above for more information.

6. How does AB 2138 help formerly incarcerated people?

Under AB 2138, **most** Boards cannot **deny** a license on the basis of:

- (1) **Many*** criminal convictions that are 7 years or older or if the person was released from incarceration 7 years or more ago,
- (2) Convictions that have been dismissed per Penal Code §§ 1203.4, 1203.4a, 1203.41, or 1203.42, (commonly called “expungement”),
- (3) Convictions for which the person has received a Certificate of Rehabilitation (COR) or a pardon, or
- (4) Arrests, diversions, deferred entry of judgment, infractions, citations, or juvenile adjudications.

****The 7-year rule does not apply to:***

- (1) Serious felonies²,
- (2) Convictions requiring Tier 2 or Tier 3 sex offender registration³ under Penal Code § 290, or
- (3) **Felony financial crimes** if the person is seeking licensure under these 6 Boards: CA Board of Accountancy⁴, Contractors State License Board⁵, Professional Fiduciaries Bureau⁶, Private Investigators under the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services⁷, Cemetery and Funeral Bureau⁸, and the Department of Real Estate⁹.

Convictions that can be considered:

If the date of the conviction occurred within the last 7 years, the person was released from incarceration in the last 7 years, or is an exception to the 7-year rule, the conviction must be **substantially related** to the qualifications, functions, or duties of the business or profession to which the application is submitted.

Felony financial crimes must be **directly and adversely related to the fiduciary** qualifications, functions, or duties of the business or profession for the 6 Boards listed above.

² Cal. Penal Code § 1192.7(c).

³ Sen. Bill 384, 2017-2018 Reg. Sess., ch. 541, 2018 Cal. Stat. **NB: SB 384 goes into effect on January 1, 2021.**

⁴ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 5000 *et seq.*

⁵ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 7000 *et seq.*

⁶ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 6500 *et seq.*

⁷ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 7512 *et seq.*

⁸ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 7600 *et seq.*

⁹ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 10000 *et seq.*

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7. What do I need to disclose about my criminal history when I apply to an AB 2138 regulated Board?

Under AB 2138, most Boards cannot ask about criminal history information on the licensure application after 7/1/2020. Instead, these Boards will run a fingerprint background check. However, the California Architects Board¹⁰, Landscape Architects Technical Committee¹¹, Board of Barbering and Cosmetology¹², Bureau of Household Goods and Services^{13 14 15}, and Bureau of Automotive Repair¹⁶ **may ask** applicants about criminal history on the licensure application. Beginning January 1, 2021¹⁷, the California Architects Board and the Landscape Architects Technical Committee will run a fingerprint background check as well.

When you apply for a license, any of these Boards may ask for mitigating (favorable) information regarding your criminal history to determine if the crime is substantially related to the qualifications, duties, or functions of the license or to evaluate your rehabilitation. Disclosing any additional information about your criminal history and mitigating information is **voluntary**. If you choose to not disclose, the decision to not disclose any information should not be used as a factor to grant or deny you an application.

Read the application carefully and answer the question(s) asked. Be truthful and accurate. If you do not understand the questions asked or you need help, please contact a legal services provider for assistance. You may contact an organization listed on page 4.

8. What happens if I apply for licensure and am denied because of my conviction history?

If you are denied a license because of your criminal history, the Board must notify you in writing of:

- (1) The denial or disqualification of your license application,
- (2) Any existing procedure the Board has for you to challenge the decision or to request reconsideration,
- (3) Your right to appeal the decision, and
- (4) The fact that you can request a copy of the complete conviction history and question the accuracy of the record.

You should **review the criminal history** and provide any missing information. For example, Penal Code § 1203.4 dismissals are commonly missing from fingerprint background checks. You can provide proof of the missing information to the Board to challenge the accuracy of the record.

If the background check is correct, you have the **right to appeal** the decision by going to a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. At the hearing, you can present evidence, witnesses, and testimony to show that your criminal history is not related to the license you are seeking and that you are rehabilitated.

¹⁰ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 5500 *et seq.*

¹¹ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 5615 *et seq.*

¹² Cal. Business and Professions Code § 7301 *et seq.*

¹³ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 9800 *et seq.*

¹⁴ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 19000 *et seq.*

¹⁵ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 19225 *et seq.*

¹⁶ Cal. Business and Professions Code § 9880 *et seq.*

¹⁷ Sen. Bill 608, 2019-2020 Reg. Sess., ch. 376, 2020 Cal. Stat.

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9. Who can I contact for help with an occupational licensing matter related to my criminal history?

Depending on where you live, you will be assigned to a local Office of Administrative Hearings location¹⁸ that serves your county. You may contact an organization listed below for assistance. **Please note that each provider listed below may have capacity, eligibility, geographic, income, and other restrictions and may not be able to assist you.**

A New Way of Life Reentry Project Website: www.anewwayoflife.org Phone: 323-563-3575	Legal Services of Northern California Website: www.lsn.net Phone: 866-815-5990
Alameda County Public Defender's Office Clean Slate Program Website: http://www.co.alameda.ca.us/defender/ Phone: 510-268-7400	Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles Website: https://www.nlsa.org/ Phone: 800-433-6251 Email: reentryclinic@nlsa.org
Bay Area Legal Aid Website: www.baylegal.org Oakland Office Phone: 1-800-551-5554 Richmond Office Phone: 510-233-9954	Public Counsel Website: http://www.publiccounsel.org/ Phone: (213) 385-2977
California Rural Legal Assistance Website: www.crla.org Marysville Office* Phone: 530-742-5191 *Limited to residents of Colusa, Sutter, and Yuba counties Oxnard Office** Phone: 805-486-1068 **Limited to residents of Ventura County	Rehabilitation and Inclusion Council of the National Association of Social Workers, CA Chapter Website: http://www.naswca.org/ Email: RICouncil@naswca.org
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto Website: www.clsepa.org Phone: 650-326-6440	Root & Rebound Website: https://www.rootandrebound.org/ Phone: 510-279-4662
East Bay Community Law Center Website: www.ebclc.org Phone: 510-548-4040	
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles Website: https://lafla.org/ Phone: 213-640-3904	

¹⁸ <https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Contact#@ViewBag.JumpTo>

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