



May 12, 2022

The Honorable Chris Holden
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 5650
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1720 (Holden) SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Holden:

On behalf of a coalition of community organizations and service providers across California we are writing in strong support of AB 1720 (Holden). AB 1720 increases access by qualified individuals with arrest and conviction records to caregiving and similar jobs governed by the Department of Social Services (DSS).

DSS registers Home and Care Aides and issues licenses, permits, and certificates of approval for people to operate or provide direct care services in a community care facility, residential facility for the elderly, or child care center. DSS requires any applicant who has ever been convicted of any crime other than a minor traffic violation to obtain a criminal record "exemption" from DSS before they can work in a facility. DSS can and does deny exemptions based on convictions, even if the conviction is very old or unrelated to caregivers' work, and even when applicants have shown success at caregiving. Low-income women of color are hit especially hard by DSS's restrictive criminal record screening rules, given the disproportionate rate of arrests and low-level criminal convictions in communities of color. These women often seek caregiver related work based on past experience and success in those roles, as well as a desire to give back to their communities.

AB 1720 will streamline the licensure process for those that have been convicted of a crime to ensure that an unrelated prior conviction does not prohibit a qualified, rehabilitated person from securing employment by requiring DSS to grant a simplified criminal record exemption if the individual is qualified. This bill also prohibits DSS from requiring applicants to disclose any information regarding their criminal history as a condition of employment.

AB 1720 will save time, money, and resources, by making the criminal record exemption process more efficient and reducing the wait time for qualified applicants to be approved and begin working in DSS-licensed facilities. As the system works today, the vast majority of applicants are either approved after a long wait period or drop out of the exemption process. This bill will take the first steps toward streamlining the exemption process which will result in more caregiving jobs being filled, more workers paying taxes, fewer people relying on public benefits, and more people contributing to California's economy.

Economists estimate that reduced access to employment by people with criminal records costs the national economy approximately \$78 to \$87 billion in annual gross domestic product (GDP). Moreover, studies demonstrate that putting formerly incarcerated people back to work dramatically increases their lifetime earnings, and thus their income and sales tax contributions. As the paramount factor for reducing recidivism, employment of people with records also reduces costs associated with the criminal legal system. And, given that nearly half of all U.S. children have at least one parent with a record, access to a steady source of income for those parents means healthier, more prosperous lives for the next generation of Californians.

Thank you for your continued leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

East Bay Community Law Center
A New Way of Life Reentry Project
Root & Rebound
Alameda County Public Defenders
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
Californians for Safety & Justice
National Association of Social Workers
National Employment Law Project

cc. The Honorable Chris Holden, Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Frank Bigelow, Vice-Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Isaac G. Bryan, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member
Lisa Calderon, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member
Wendy Carrillo, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member
Megan Dahle, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member
Laurie Davies, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member
Mike Fong, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member
Vince Fong, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member
Jesse Gabriel, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member

Eduardo Garcia, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member

Marc Levine, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member

Bill Quirk, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member

Robert Rivas, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member

Akilah Weber, M.D., Assembly Appropriations Committee Member

Lori D. Wilson, Assembly Appropriations Committee Member