



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

May 28, 2019

Chairwoman Lynch Prata
Senate Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

Re: S0610 -- Relating to Labor and Labor Relations -- Licensing

Dear Chairwoman Prata and Members of the Committee,

As Executive Director of the Providence Human Relations Commission, I write to you today in support of Senate Bill 0610.

Impaneled in 1963, the Providence Human Relations Commission works to protect and expand residents' rights to fair housing, education, employment, credit and public accommodations, free from discrimination.

A conviction record is a scarlet letter with respects to employment. The Department of Justice [reports](#) that individuals who have been incarcerated can expect their future earnings reduced by approximately 40 percent after they return to their communities. Racial disparities in the criminal justice system--which result in higher rates of incarceration and harsher sentencing for people of color--and exclusionary policies, such as occupational licensing bans, are responsible for the labor market inequalities that individuals with records face.

The unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated people is nearly six times that of the unemployment rate for the general United States population, with working-age "prison penalties" increasing [unemployment rates](#) anywhere from 14% for white men, to 37% for black women when compared to their general population peers. In Rhode Island, 66% of licensed jobs have some form of conviction-based barrier built into the license application process. Reforming occupational licensing laws, as proposed in Senate Bill 0610, stands to change the very real material impact these barriers have on our communities, lowering recidivism and creating stable lifelines for individuals locked out of accessing a myriad of basic support services due to former convictions.

The passage of S0610 is a critical step in expanding opportunity for residents routinely denied access to gainful employment when re-entering our communities. I urge you to pass S0610.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sol Taubin".

Sol Taubin
Executive Director
Providence Human Relations Commission