

August 24, 2022

Dear Chairman Leach and the members of the House Interim Committee on Criminal Justice Reform,

On behalf of the Texas Association of Business (TAB), thank you for allowing me to submit the following commentary on the interim charge to examine opportunities to reduce recidivism and remove barriers to re-entry after justice involvement.

The Texas economy is the most successful, dynamic, and growing ones in the nation due to our strong leadership on tax, regulatory, education, safety, and infrastructure policies. As Texas continues to thrive, we must look towards innovative solutions to maintain our workforce needs.

As noted in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce report, *The Business Case for Criminal Justice Reform: Second Chance Hiring*, seventy million people in the U.S. have an arrest or conviction record. Every year, 600,000 Americans leave incarceration and return to their communities. At the same time, we are in a tighter than ever labor market with record low unemployment and strong job growth. As the Texas economy continues to soar, employers must look outside the box to source talent and address barriers to re-entry for individuals that are eager to be contributing members of society and support themselves and their families after serving their time in incarceration.

Therefore, TAB is a strong supporter of efforts that prioritize educational and vocational programs for incarcerated individuals, which are proven to reduce re-offending and increase workforce participation. TAB understands the benefit of employer collaboration to support and enhance a sustainable workforce, including participating in second chance hiring and giving employers the opportunity to fill job vacancies and provide career paths for both youths and adults with criminal records.

TAB commends the Texas Legislature for their efforts in the 86th legislative session in passing HB 918, legislation that encourages that every inmate exiting the prison system is provided with a state identification card, social security card, resume, and job interview training. Since this legislation has been implemented, over 25,000 inmates have left with a resume and the appropriate documents they needed to find a job. TAB will continue to support any measure that ensures that every Texan exiting the Texas Department of Criminal Justice system receives a valid state identification card or driver's license. TAB also supports reducing occupational



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licensing barriers for Texans with criminal backgrounds if the offense committed was not directly related to the type of license.

TAB supports policies that benefit employers who implement second chance hiring practices. The TAB Foundation has initiated The Texas Second Chance Employers Coalition to educate employers on the benefits of implementing second chance hiring practices. Benefits include maintaining higher retention rates, extending the pool of eligible candidates, and fulfilling diversity, equity, and inclusion principles.

With the declining fertility rate and tight labor market, the economic benefit of hiring second chance employees is critical and now is the time to tap into the talent pool of skilled, qualified, and loyal individuals to meet workforce needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important workforce issue and for your commitment and dedication to the great state of Texas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Megan Mauro".

Megan Mauro  
SVP, Policy and Advocacy  
Texas Association of Business