

# GETTING GEORGIANS BACK TO WORK

Opening Access to Occupational Licenses: SB157



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**Georgia should reduce barriers that prevent qualified individuals from working in licensed fields. Many Georgians with an old or irrelevant criminal record are denied the opportunity to pursue a career. Reform will help Georgia meet workforce needs and allow rehabilitated individuals to move on from their past.**

Georgia Justice Project has assisted thousands of Georgians with a record who are working hard to get a better job and support their families and has worked with legislators, businesses, and other stakeholders to successfully advocate for **22 changes to Georgia law** that reduce legal barriers to reentry. Occupational licensing reform is an essential next step to help Georgia employers access the Untapped Talent of the 4.5 million people with a Georgia criminal record.

## Did you know?

**1 in 7 jobs** require an occupational license, including **1 in 4** of Georgia's high-demand jobs.



Uncertainty about how their record will be considered discourages workers from pursuing education for a licensed profession.



Georgians risk license denial even if their record is minor, old, or restricted and sealed.

Fair access to licensed jobs reduces recidivism. States with more barriers have higher recidivism.<sup>1</sup>



Many qualified individuals are eager and ready to work.

**Georgia Justice Project has worked with a diverse group of legislators and stakeholders to develop solutions (SB157)**

- 1 Allow Georgians to request a review of their record before they complete education and training for a license. Lack of clarity about what a board will consider discourages people from investing time and money to pursue their dream career.
- 2 Licensing boards should only consider relevant convictions that are recent or serious and have not been expunged or pardoned.
- 3 Basic due process provisions will allow boards to make informed decisions and ensure those who have invested time and resources to pursue a license will be heard.
- 4 Licensing boards should collect and release basic data about how applications are handled.

Want to learn more? Visit [GJP.org/advocacy](https://www.gjp.org/advocacy) or contact Wade Askew, Policy Manager at [Wade@GJP.org](mailto:Wade@GJP.org) or 404.827.0027 ext. 214

<sup>1</sup> *Turning shackles into bootstraps: Why occupational licensing reform is the missing piece of criminal justice reform.* Stephen Slivinski for the Center for the Study of Economic Liberty (2016); see also *Bridging the Divide: Licensing and Recidivism.* Vittorio Nastasi and Samuel R. Staley for the James Madison Institute (2019).

# SECOND CHANCE HIRING IN LICENSED OCCUPATIONS

Reduce Worker Shortages, Benefit the Economy & Lower Recidivism

Georgia Justice Project (GJP) works to reduce barriers to opportunity for people with a past criminal record through direct representation and policy change. Employer resources, including more information on the data and research cited below, can be found at [GJP.org/employers](http://GJP.org/employers).

## SECOND CHANCE HIRING CAN HELP YOUR INDUSTRY AND COMPANY



- There is untapped talent within the **4.5 million people** who have a Georgia criminal record.
- The US **loses \$87 billion in GDP and 1.9 million workers** when it excludes people with criminal records from the labor market. People with records lose more than \$372 billion in annual wages.
- Research shows employees with criminal records often have **better retention, less turnover, and are promoted faster than their counterparts**.
- **85% of Georgia small business owners**, and many Chambers of Commerce, support reforms that lead to fairer access to licensing for people with records.

## CONCERNED ABOUT RISK? CONSIDER THE DATA



- Research shows that **most recidivism happens within 3 years of an arrest**, and almost all occurs within 5 years.
- **Employment is the best antidote to recidivism**. Individuals with a steady job are twice as likely to avoid arrest than their unemployed counterparts.
- Georgia has some of nation's strongest **employer liability protection** for hiring individuals with criminal records.
- Second chance hiring benefits all Georgians by **strengthening the economy and enhancing public safety**.

## DISPELLING MYTHS ABOUT CRIMINAL RECORDS



- 40% of adults in Georgia have a criminal record. But most records are minor. Half of the 4.5 million people with a Georgia criminal record were **only arrested once, and only 14% have been convicted of a felony**.
- **Felonies encompass a very wide range** of behaviors, including writing a bad check and marijuana possession. Less than 10% of Georgia felony convictions are for serious violent or sexual offenses, and less than 40% of people with a felony conviction were sentenced to prison.
- **Georgia has the longest sentences in the country**, so someone may be on probation for something that happened very long ago.
- Georgia's expungement law is very limited and difficult to access. **Less than 1% of those eligible for relief have actually gotten it**.