



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 421

March 6, 2018

To the Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

Thank you Chairman and Members of the Committee. On behalf of Americans for Prosperity, and our more than 50,000 activists in the state of Kansas, I urge you to support S.B. 421, which would give ex-convicts a fresh start in life by making it easier for them to get a job and re-enter society.

Too often, those who have made a mistake early in life are punished over and over again by draconian laws long after they have paid their debt to society. The collateral consequences of incarceration create barriers to opportunity for people who are sincerely trying to transform their lives, making it difficult find employment, participate civically, or even simply rejoin the day-to-day life in society we take for granted.

Americans for Prosperity advocates reforms to the criminal justice system that promote human dignity, reduce costs, enhance public safety, and make victims whole in order to advance freedom and well-being for all. Too many people in Kansas go to prison—and for far too long—for low-level, nonviolent crimes. All criminals should be held accountable, but punishments should be proportional to the crime committed. Making matters worse, having a criminal record makes it nearly impossible to find work in many licensed occupations, leaving those who have already paid their debts to society needlessly obstructed from rejoining it. In our state, these laws keep people from obtaining jobs and productively re-entering a community once they have served their sentence. After being held accountable, an ex-offender should be allowed to put his or her life back together, and get a fresh start.

S.B. 421 would provide a second chance to ex-offenders in Kansas who have already paid their debt to society by making it easier for them to obtain occupational licenses. While barely one in twenty American workers needed a license to do their jobs only a few decades ago, more than one in five Kansans require licensing or certification to do so today, making access to occupational licenses a significant barrier to opportunity for ex-offenders. Under the proposed law, a conviction of a crime more than five years before the date of the application may not be grounds for the denial of licenses for workers who haven't been convicted of any additional crimes in the intervening period. Provided the conviction is not directly related to the practice of the profession in question, a prospective worker will not be unduly barred from re-entering the workforce, enabling them to provide for themselves, their families, and their communities once again.

We look forward to working with the legislature in the future, to remove the barriers to opportunity and collateral consequences of incarceration that hold back hard working Kansans from creating value for society and transforming their lives.

Sincerely,

Jeff Glendening
State Director
Americans for Prosperity – KS