The Business Case: Becoming a Fair-Chance Employer

Our broken criminal justice system has dire effects on our communities and families—particularly on people of color. When we look past the stigma of a record, we find talented and qualified workers. Giving a fair chance to work opens your talent pool, and is good for the economy and public safety.

70 million
or almost 1 in 3 adults have records.¹

$78-87 billion
lost to GDP²

In 2014, our economy lost billions because people with records couldn’t work.

Employment

Employment is the single most important influence on reducing re-offending.³

Workers with records have been found to be more productive, have less turnover, and promoted faster.⁴

Jobs for 100 formerly incarcerated people saves millions.⁵

$55 million lifetime earnings
$1.9 million income tax
$770,000 sales tax
“We need to move beyond the two prongs of ‘bottom-line’ and ‘growth’ as companies, and understand that we all will thrive when we include the third prong of ‘investing in the community.’” – Business owner

Employers can be part of the solution.

1. **Lead a fair-chance culture shift.** Negative stereotypes of people with records are tenacious. Changing hearts and minds will require a genuine commitment from leadership internally and publicly.

2. **Understand your hiring policy and align it with existing laws.** Misconceptions are common. Federal anti-discrimination law actually prohibits blanket bans against any person with a record.

3. **Create a better policy. Ban-the-box and delay inquiries until the conditional offer.** We are all subject to biases—conscious or not. To minimize unfairness, evaluate each job candidate’s talents and skills before considering a record.

4. **Provide training, assess outcomes, and innovate.** To implement the new policy, educate, create buy-in, and train personnel. Commit to evaluating the effectiveness of the new policy and continuously improve.

Learn more.
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End Notes
1 NELP (2016)
2 Bucknor & Barber, CEPR (2016).
4 Study and employers cited in Research Summary, NELP (2016).
6 Derek Barrett, founder and CEO of D and B Painting Co., Inc.