



We can improve Michigan’s business climate and public safety

As business leaders we want to ensure that Michigan continues to be on a trajectory of economic development and prosperity. Among other things, this requires businesses to have access to talented people. Formerly incarcerated individuals offer an opportunity to meet the talent needs across the state.

Michigan taxpayers currently spend nearly \$2 billion annually on corrections. Of this, millions are spent on the continued incarceration of parole-eligible low-risk prisoners. These people can safely join the workforce and provide for their families. Our taxpayer dollars would be better-spent on roads, schools, job training, and other components of a successful business environment.

Meaningful access to employment increases community safety

We can also do more to increase public safety by removing the barriers to employment of formerly incarcerated people, as a good job is the single most important factor in post-release success.

Michigan’s unemployment rate is at historic lows and many businesses in Michigan are suffering from a shortage of qualified workers. Meanwhile the unemployment rate for individuals on parole is 67 percent. In spite of this, many of the 10,000 people released from MDOC annually — including those with low-level, non-violent crimes — are *legally barred from employment* in health care facilities with residential beds and from home health care services *for years* even after they have paid their debt to society.

This arbitrary, and unnecessary, restriction should be removed. The “one-size-fits-all” ban does not allow employers to consider a person’s personal circumstances or their suitability for the job available. It simply substitutes the government’s judgment for that of employers, notwithstanding the fact that employers independently screen potential employees’ criminal histories to make decisions about who they can safely hire.

Unnecessary bans on employment for people who have served their time do not serve either the public interest or public safety. Removing these blanket bans will offer a meaningful pathway to gainful employment of formerly incarcerated people that strengthens both Michigan’s business climate and its workforce.

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Michigan needs objective, smart parole policies and fewer unnecessary barriers to employment, like the 10-year ban on employment in health care facilities with residential beds.

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