



Texas Inmate Families Association
Strengthening families through support, education and advocacy

Dear President Obama:

My name is _____. I am currently incarcerated in Texas. I am making a personal appeal to you to issue an executive order removing the question about criminal history on applications for employment with federal agencies or those who contract with them.

Mr. President, I want to make something crystal clear: This is more than an issue of employment. This is an issue about human rights, about allowing people to find dignity in what we do and who we are. How can individuals who have the doors to dignity and opportunity slammed in their faces, over and over, because of an unchangeable part of their history, find the patience and determination necessary to not give in to despair and not return to old habits?

We are not nameless people. We are fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, and we deserve the opportunity to come back to our families and communities and find honest, honorable employment based on what we know and what we can do. For the 650,000 men and women leaving our prisons each year, it is not yet about choices. It is in fact not about opportunity. It is still about economic and employment discrimination practiced by the thousands of employers who have contracts with the government.

While in prison, I have gained knowledge and skills needed to be ready to seek employment and take the steps necessary to contribute to my family and to my community. However, I have read that almost every employer asks about criminal history, that our willingness to work doesn't matter, that our qualifications don't matter, and that our determination to succeed doesn't matter. I have heard that the question about criminal history prevents us from even being considered for work.

I ask that you do the right thing, Mr. President. I ask that you Ban the Box on applications for employment in federal agencies and the companies that contract with them, and that you do it now. By your actions you will model the idea that people can find redemption and that we are invested in the idea that our history is not a pointer to our future. Each person in our community has the right to be judged on their potential, not only on their past.

Respectfully,

Printed Name:

TDCJ #