TO: The Honorable Members of the PA House of Representatives
FROM: Alex Halper, Director, Government Affairs
DATE: April 11, 2018
RE: Support H.B. 1419

I write on behalf of the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry to urge your support for H.B.1419, which provides that certain low-level, nonviolent criminal records be sealed after a period of time. We understand the House may consider the bill today.

This bill is smart and reasonable public policy that will help address two challenges confronting our Commonwealth: facilitating the long-term employability of individuals with a criminal record and the difficulty employers experience finding qualified applicants for open positions.

According to bill advocates, more than one-third of the Commonwealth’s working-age citizens have criminal records, many of which are minor, non-violent offenses but still may create a barrier to employment. While current law prohibits an employer from refusing to hire someone based on criminal history unless the offense is related to the job position, sealing old criminal records after a period of time in which the individual stays crime-free is likely to help reentrants secure a job and avoid recidivism.

This legislation is also likely to help Pennsylvania employers address the skills gap that many experience when they are attempting to hire. The fact is many employers report difficulty finding qualified applicants to fill available positions and the reentrant population represents a pool of talent that could help address this deficit.

The PA Chamber further supports language in H.B. 1419 that provides immunity from liability for employers under certain circumstances. This language is consistent with current law and rightfully acknowledges that pursuing constructive public policy of this nature can and should be balanced with reasonable protections for employers.

We urge you to support H.B. 1419. Please contact Alex Halper at abalper@pachamber.org or 717-720-5471 with any questions or to discuss.