



TO: The Honorable Members of the PA House of Representatives

FROM: Alex Halper, Director, Government Affairs

DATE: June 24, 2020

RE: Support S.B. 637 – Occupational licensing reform

On behalf of the PA Chamber, I urge support for S.B. 637, related to occupational licensing rules for applicants with a criminal record, which the House may consider today.

Despite the severe economic disruption and unemployment caused by the pandemic and business shutdown, Pennsylvania remains in the midst of a workforce crisis as many employers struggle to find qualified workers to fill open positions. Addressing these challenges will be even more critical as Pennsylvania works towards economic recovery.

Pennsylvania oversees 29 boards and commissions that administer over 250 types of professional licenses; and their rules vary in terms of when a criminal record can factor into decisions for granting licenses. S.B. 637 establishes a more uniform standard, including providing that a license may only be denied if the record is related to the occupation. Employers follow a similar standard if a job applicant has a criminal record and it makes sense to be applied in this context as well.

The bill also requires agencies to determine and publicize the types of criminal records that directly relate to particular licenses and was amended yesterday to ensure that the employer community's perspective will be considered when agencies develop these policies. Potential applicants could also receive a ruling on whether their criminal record is disqualifying for a particular license. These reforms will add much needed transparency and predictability to this process and allow individuals to make informed decisions related to education and training opportunities.

Helping otherwise qualified individuals obtain occupational licenses is one part of a multi-pronged strategy to address workforce challenges and we urge you to support S.B. 637. Please contact Alex Halper at ahalper@pachamber.org or 717-645-8730 with any questions or to discuss.