



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT

Bob Mook
bmook@cclponline.org,
303-573-5669, ext. 311

Bill would give Coloradans a chance to compete in the workforce

DENVER -- Hundreds of thousands of Coloradans whose opportunities are limited by past mistakes could see their job prospects improve under a bill being considered by Colorado legislators developed by Colorado Center on Law and Policy.

Known as the Colorado Chance to Compete Act, [House Bill 1305](#) would prohibit most employers from asking about criminal history on initial job applications. Should this legislation pass, Colorado would join nine other states that have adopted similar laws. Studies show that when states and local governments enact such policies, job applicants are more likely to land face-to-face interviews, be judged on their merits alone and secure employment.

"When so many of our neighbors live in the shadows because of a mistake they made years ago, we can't rightfully claim to have the best economy in the country," said Rep. Jovan Melton, D-Aurora, who is sponsoring the legislation. "In 2014 alone, the unemployment of people with criminal histories cost the U.S. between \$78 billion and \$87 billion in lost GDP. That is unacceptable. I am proud to sponsor the Colorado Chance to Compete Act because it will let those who have paid their debts to society to reenter the workforce, provide for their families and contribute fully to their communities."

Criminal justice experts consistently report that one of the biggest deterrents from reoffending is the ability to reenter the workforce. The Colorado Chance to Compete Act would remove this barrier through a reasonable approach that is fair to all involved. Businesses can still conduct a criminal background check at any point and applicants would get a fair shot at getting a job.

"This bill will allow people to take care of themselves and their families," said Rep. Mike Foote, D-Lafayette, who is co-sponsoring the legislation. "For far too long, our approach to criminal justice has focused solely on enforcement and deterrence, with little consideration for what these folks are supposed to do once they have paid their debts to society. If the Chance to Compete Act passes, having made a mistake will no longer impose a life sentence of poverty on the offender and his or her children."

It is estimated that the parents of 60,000 children in Colorado have experienced incarceration. When these individuals return home, it is critical that they can compete in the workforce so that their families and children receive the financial support they need.

"CCLP is concerned that people with a criminal history are unable to support themselves and their families. As a result of this bill, a qualified applicant who made mistakes in the past is more likely to be considered for a life-changing job," said Claire Levy, CCLP's Executive Director. Most state jobs are now subject to similar requirements as a result of a bill Levy sponsored in 2012 while serving in the legislature.

The legislation was assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. To learn more about this bill, [click here](#).

The Colorado Center on Law and Policy is a nonprofit, non-partisan research and advocacy organization that engages in legislative, administrative and legal advocacy on behalf of low-income Coloradans