

New Belt law aims to ease licensing barriers for formerly incarcerated Illinoisans

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SPRINGFIELD – State Senator Christopher Belt led a bipartisan effort to provide formerly incarcerated individuals with a second chance to maintain a publicly clean licensing record. The new law allows these individuals to continue serving the people of Illinois as licensed professionals while still providing the state with the flexibility to decide when to issue a license for protection of the public.

“This law will help people who, despite their past, want to get out there and work” said Belt (D-Swansea). “This is another great step on the path to allowing those with criminal records to start over and become productive members in a community.”

Belt's new law is a result of findings from the Comprehensive Licensing Information to Minimize Barriers task force. The goals of the CLIMB task force were to identify low- and middle-income licensed occupations, gather information from the regulatory board for those occupations and create a final report with recommendations for the General Assembly. The report found that unnecessary restrictions and confusing procedures can discourage citizens with a history of involvement with the justice system from even trying to get a license. The task force's recommendations, now implemented in House Bill 4762, included replacing vague language like "good moral character" and not considering arrests that did not lead to conviction. They also recommended that the state continue to pursue the approach developed by the Justice Center's Fair Change Licensing Reform project, which aimed to create a more equitable process for licensure by considering factor's beyond criminal records.

House Bill 4762 is the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation's effort to meet these recommendations for individuals who have been formerly incarcerated and who face significant negative impacts on their employment, reputations and livelihoods. The law does not change any existing requirements where certain convictions, like forcible felonies or those which require registration as a sex offender, are an automatic barrier to licensure. This change only applies to the professions where IDFPR can apply a discretionary review of conviction history. This legislation does not change the requirement for certain professions to have fingerprints taken for a background check.

[House Bill 4762](#) was signed into law Friday.