



August 15, 2016

Dear Members,

As you may know, criminal justice reform is one of Freedom Partners' important focus areas in 2016 and beyond. We are working to support comprehensive reform that would save taxpayers money, make communities safer, and help individuals rejoin society and improve their lives.

But government isn't the only place where criminal justice reform can and should happen. The business community and other private-sector organizations also have a critical role to play. As a member of Freedom Partners, we urge you to take an active role in driving positive social change on this issue.

For example, one of the biggest difficulties facing individuals with criminal records is finding jobs following their release. This is often the result of a combination of government restrictions and private-sector policies, which often create barriers for individuals who are trying to redeem themselves, provide for their families, and improve the communities in which they live.

In light of this, we urge you to consider implementing a "Ban the Box" policy at your organization. This would change your hiring practices to delay the question of whether applicants have a criminal record to later in the recruitment and interview process. By delaying this question, applicants are less likely to be rejected before their qualifications are considered.

We have employed this approach for many years at Koch Industries where I work as General Counsel, and we removed the question from all of our applications last year. This has worked well for Koch Industries and has led to the hiring of individuals who are hungry, productive, and dedicated employees.

We believe that capable and qualified individuals who want to work hard and contribute to their communities should not be rejected at the very beginning of the hiring process. Nor should anyone be judged forever solely on what happened on their worst day. Rejecting these individuals is also short-sighted from a business perspective. An estimated 70 million adults in the United States, or one in three, have some type of criminal record. For employers seeking the best talent, it makes sense for a company to consider all factors, including any prior criminal record, in the context of an applicant's other life experiences. We are in a global competition for the best talent period; not the best talent with or without a record.

We also want to encourage you to reach out to your local lawmakers – whether U.S. Senators, Representatives, or officials at the state level – and urge them to pass criminal justice reform legislation without delay. In recent years, many states have reformed their criminal justice systems and have reduced crime rates, incarceration rates, and recidivism rates, which keeps everyone safer, including law enforcement. Similar common-sense reforms are now being considered in Congress, and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan pledged to bring legislation to the floor in September. As leaders in your communities,

we hope you will urge your elected officials to support this overdue effort to reform the criminal justice system.

These are only a few of the ways you can drive positive change on this timely issue. If you have any questions, or would like to discuss this in greater detail, please feel free to contact me. Freedom Partners will continue to focus on this issue in the months and years ahead. We are grateful for your support and are honored to work with you as partners. Together, we can make our system more just and our communities safer, and help remove barriers to opportunity for everyone, especially the least advantaged.

Sincerely,



Mark Holden
Chairman
Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce