



Written Testimony of Mr. Jason Adkins, Esq., Executive Director

Senate Jobs, Agriculture, and Rural Development Committee

March 13, 2013

“Ban the Box” H.F. 690/S.F. 523

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jason Adkins, and I am executive director of the Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Minnesota. MCC wishes to express its support for S.F. 523 (Champion), which includes a ban on inquiries into a job applicant’s criminal history prior to selecting that applicant for an interview.

MCC actively supports enacting and enforcing laws that create safe communities and promote the common good. Our faith teaches us that civil laws should always respect the dignity of each person and the whole person. A criminal offender still has dignity even when he or she violates the laws of society and fails to recognize the dignity of others. When an individual violates the law, however, he or she should be punished.

Punishment should always serve the purpose of rendering justice to the victim and society. But when punishment is sought only for retribution, it becomes vengeful and violates human dignity. As the United States bishops have said:

Just as God never abandons us, so too we must be in covenant with one another. We are all sinners, and our response to sin and failure should not be abandonment and despair, but rather justice, contrition, reparation, and return or re-integration of all into the community.¹

Our criminal justice system should seek to rehabilitate the offender and facilitate his or her re-entry into society. After an offender has paid his or her debt, he or she should not be further punished by additional “collateral consequences,” such as being denied access to work. Unfortunately, some employers disqualify applicants based on a job application’s criminal-history inquiry without asking any further questions about reform, capability or fitness.

H.F. 690 prevents prospective employers from weeding out candidates in the initial stage of the application process solely on the presence of criminal history. The bill recognizes the dignity of workers because it provides a greater protection for job applicants as they seek re-entry into society after criminal conduct. It is unreasonable for society to expect individuals to re-enter the community as productive citizens if their job application is dismissed without an opportunity to meet face-to-face and explain why they would benefit the company as an employee.

475 University Avenue W.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103

Tel: 651-227-8777
Fax: 651-227-2675
www.mncc.org

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL AND MINNEAPOLIS ♦ DIOCESE OF CROOKSTON ♦ DIOCESE OF DULUTH

DIOCESE OF NEW ULM ♦ DIOCESE OF SAINT CLOUD ♦ DIOCESE OF WINONA

Testimony of Mr. Jason Adkins. Esq.

H.F. 690

March 7, 2013

Further, if offenders do not have access to gainful employment, they are more likely to fall back into criminal behavior. Recidivism is detrimental to the offender, to the victims of crimes, and to the community. H.F. 690 does not prohibit employers from asking about criminal history, but it requires that applicants be given a fair shot at being selected for an interview.

MCC recognizes the concerns that employers have hiring applicants with a criminal background. Employees who have a criminal background and commit a further offense during the course of employment can be the source of costly litigation for employers. However, this bill specifically protects employers from some liability that can arise from hiring an applicant with a criminal history.

We ask that you pass this bill and help put “justice” back into the criminal justice system in Minnesota.

Thank you.

¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice* (2000).