



October 12, 2015

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Tovo, and Council Members,

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed Fair Chance ordinance being considered by you and your colleagues.

Job applicants with records often face additional barriers in finding employment. There are an estimated 70 million people in the United States—nearly one in three adults—who have arrest or conviction records. Research shows that when job seekers who are qualified for employment struggle to find a job and maximize their potential, families struggle, and our economy as a whole is weakened.

In response, many cities, counties, and states have adopted what are widely known as “ban the box” policies so that employers consider a job candidate’s qualifications first, without the stigma of a conviction record. These initiatives provide applicants a better chance at employment by removing the conviction history question on the job application and delaying the background check inquiry until later in the hiring.

Furthermore, several cities and seven states—Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon and Rhode Island—have removed the conviction history question on job applications for private employers, greatly expanding the number of individuals benefiting from the policy. Federally, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) endorsed removing the conviction question from job applications as a best practice in its 2012 guidance. Because our criminal justice system disparately impacts communities of color, Ban the Box (or Fair Chance) policies have an especially positive impact on African-American and Latino job seekers. A fair chance ordinance for this City will expand our ability to increase economic opportunities for all Austinites.

Thank you for passing this critical policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Natalie Madeira Cofield". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Natalie Madeira Cofield  
President & CEO  
Greater Austin Black Chamber of Commerce



AUSTIN GAY & LESBIAN  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

[www.aglcc.org](http://www.aglcc.org)

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**Project Manager**

Ceci Gratias

**Mission:** To empower and  
strengthen the LGBT  
business community and its  
allies.

A 501(c)(6) non-profit  
organization.

**AGLCC**  
PO Box 49216  
Austin, Texas 78765  
(512) 761-LGBT (5428)  
[info@aglcc.org](mailto:info@aglcc.org)

October 12, 2015

Austin City Council  
Austin City Hall  
301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Tovo, and Council Members,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Austin Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce in support of the proposed Fair Chance ordinance being considered by you and your colleagues.

Job applicants with records often face additional barriers in finding employment. There are an estimated 70 million people in the United States—nearly one in three adults—who have arrest or conviction records. Research shows that when job seekers who are qualified for employment struggle to find a job and maximize their potential, families struggle, and our economy as a whole is weakened.

In response, many cities, counties, and states have adopted what are widely known as “ban the box” policies so that employers consider a job candidate’s qualifications first, without the stigma of a conviction record. These initiatives provide applicants a better chance at employment by removing the conviction history question on the job application and delaying the background check inquiry until later in the hiring.

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Thank you for passing this critical policy.

Edgar Gierbolini  
AGLCC Chairperson



**Austin Area  
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities.  
Changing Lives.*

8011-A Cameron Rd.  
Suite 100  
Austin, TX 78754-3811  
512-478-7176-T  
512-478-1239-F  
www.aaul.org info@aaul.org

October 9, 2015

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Tovo, and Council Members,

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed Fair Chance ordinance being considered by you and your colleagues.

Job applicants with records often face additional barriers in finding employment. There are an estimated 70 million people in the United States—nearly one in three adults—who have arrest or conviction records. Research shows that when job seekers who are qualified for employment struggle to find a job and maximize their potential, families struggle, and our economy as a whole is weakened.

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Thank you for passing this critical policy.

Sincerely,

W. Teddy McDaniel, III.  
President & CEO  
Austin Area Urban League



*The Next Generation of Austin Leaders*

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Tovo, and Council Members,

I am writing this personal letter in support of the proposed Fair Chance ordinance being considered by you and your colleagues.

Job applicants with records often face additional barriers in finding employment. There are an estimated 70 million people in the United States—nearly one in three adults—who have arrest or conviction records. Research shows that when job seekers who are qualified for employment struggle to find a job and maximize their potential, families struggle, and our economy as a whole is weakened.

In response, many cities, counties, and states have adopted what are widely known as “ban the box” policies so that employers consider a job candidate’s qualifications first, without the stigma of a conviction record. These initiatives provide applicants a better chance at employment by removing the conviction history question on the job application and delaying the background check inquiry until later in the hiring.

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I believe this common sense proposal is a step in the right direction to increasing affordability in our city and growing our middle class. Two critical issues we need to address now to prepare for future generations.

Thank you for passing this critical policy,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Glazer', with a long, sweeping underline.

Matt Glazer  
Executive Director  
Austin Young Chamber of Commerce

October 6, 2015

Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and City Council

RE: Fair Chance

Job applicants with records often face barriers in finding employment. There are an estimated 70 million people in the United States—nearly one in three adults—who have arrest or conviction records. One of the most critical components addressing recidivism and allowing people to reenter the community and stay out of prison is employment. When members of our community who are qualified for employment struggle to find a job and maximize their potential, families struggle, and our economy as a whole is weakened.

In response, many cities, counties, and states have adopted what are widely known as “ban the box” or “Fair Chance” policies so that employers consider a job candidate’s qualifications first, without the stigma of a conviction record. These initiatives provide applicants a better chance by removing the conviction history question on the job application and delaying the background check inquiry until later in the hiring.

Furthermore, several cities and seven states—Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon and Rhode Island—have removed the conviction history question on job applications for private employers, greatly expanding the number of individuals benefiting from the policy. Federally, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) endorsed removing the conviction question from job applications as a best practice in its 2012 guidance. Because our criminal justice system disparately impacts communities of color, Fair Chance policies have an especially positive impact on African-American and Latino job seekers.

The policy before the Austin City Council would require that employers refrain from asking about conviction history until the later stages of the job application process. This would apply to most or all private employers in Austin. Employers would still be allowed to run a criminal background check and use professional discretion towards relevant convictions under the policy. No state or federal rules would be superseded by the policy.

We support Austin being a pioneer in Texas by passing a comprehensive Fair Chance policy for private employers.

Thanks so much for your support on this important issue.

Steven Bercu,  
CEO, BookPeople



## Dove Springs Proud

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October 20, 2015

To Mayor, Councilmembers Garza and the members of the Economic Development Committee:

Dove Springs Proud (DSP) is pleased to submit this letter of support to you in regards to moving forward in drafting a city ordinance for Fair Chance Hiring. We are specific in we support the idea of eliminating the question whether you have been convicted of a crime from the job application. We support everyone being able to apply, qualified applicants being allowed an interview and being given a conditional job offer before the hiring entity can perform a background check. At this time, if the individual does have a criminal record, then the entity may decide to deny the offer. We do not support any individual who has been convicted of child abuse or assault being hired to work with any agency dealing with youth. As the draft ordinance is being written, we request to be sent the draft for our further review prior to the next vote. We believe all individuals who have been convicted of a crime, once they have completed their restitution to society through probation or time served, should be allowed to obtain a job to promote their re-entry. We also believe this will reduce recidivism as a key component of refraining from crime is obtaining a quality work placement. Many of our youth and residents make bad choices which we do not want to hinder them from providing for themselves or their family and returning to being a positive part of our community.

DSP is a recognized City of Austin Civic group #1441 with the sole mission to support the youth and residents of 78744. Our membership is comprised of 343 members of the 78744 area who include the Dove Springs Recreation Advisory Board President and members, non-profit Executive Directors, AISD Campus Advisory Council members, AISD UpClose graduates, City of Austin Community Development Commissioners, AISD Community Bond Oversight Committee members, AISD PTA Presidents, Pastors, residents, public officials and individuals who grew up or serve the Dove Springs neighborhood. Should you have any questions pertaining to this letter, please feel free to contact us at [dovespringsproud@yahoo.com](mailto:dovespringsproud@yahoo.com).

Sincerely,

Dove Springs Proud (DSP)



# Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable

## *Building Successful Strategies for Offender Reentry and Reintegration in Austin/Travis County, Texas*

October 2, 2015

Economic Opportunity Committee, Austin City Council  
The Honorable Ellen Troxclair, Chair  
The Honorable Ora Houston, Vice-Chair  
The Honorable Gregorio Casar  
The Honorable Leslie Pool  
301 W. Second Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: Fair Chance Hiring in Austin

Dear Chair Troxclair, Vice-Chair Houston, Council Member Casar, and Council Member Pool,

On behalf of the Planning Council of the Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable (A/TCRRT), I would like to thank you for addressing the issue of employment barriers for individuals involved in the criminal justice system.

The A/TCRRT is a robust collaborative of private and public sector individuals and organizations seeking to promote public safety through effective reentry and reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons and individuals with criminal histories. We receive funding from both Travis County and the City of Austin because we share the goal of maintaining safe and healthy communities through removing the systemic barriers facing those with a criminal record.

Representatives from the A/TCRRT, including myself, were pleased to participate in the stakeholder process facilitated by the Human Resources Department and to submit what we believe are the critical elements of an effective Fair Chance Hiring policy. However, we do not believe those critical elements were effectively communicated to the Economic Opportunity Committee.

The Economic Opportunity Committee heard testimony on both September 14<sup>th</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup> in support of a Fair Chance Hiring policy that should include not only removing the criminal history question from employment applications, but also waiting until a conditional offer of employment is made to ask about criminal history or run a background check, and adhering to EEOC guidelines that require an individualized assessment of applicants and the opportunity to provide mitigating evidence.

**The A/TCRRT supports the suggested policies included in the enclosed document explaining why Austin needs a comprehensive Fair Chance Hiring policy now.** Please review these recommendations carefully and consider them as you move forward with an ordinance that will allow individuals with a criminal record to

### PLANNING COUNCIL

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Texas Criminal Justice Coalition  
Planning Council Chair

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UT School of Law  
Planning Council Vice-Chair

**Laura Sovine, LMSW-AP**  
Travis Co. Health & Human/Veterans Services  
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Executive Committee At-Large Representative

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Austin Travis County Integral Care

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Travis Co. Justice Planning

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LifeWorks Austin

**Melissa Orren**  
Austin Tenant's Council

**Antonio Jorge Renaud**  
Center for Community Change

**Charles Robinson**  
Travis Co. Adult Probation

**Jaime Rodriguez**  
U.S. Bureau of Prisons

**Danny Smith**  
Travis County Sheriff's Office

**Mia Sneed**  
Texas Health & Human Services Commission

**DeWayne Street**  
Goodwill Industries of Central Texas

**Louella Tate, Ph.D.**  
Community Representative

**Kenneth Thompson**  
Texas Department of Family & Protective Services  
Nominating Committee Chair

**Pete Valdez**  
City of Austin Community Court

**Bree Williams**  
Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO)

### Advisory Members

Victoria Terranova  
Geraldine Nagy  
Marvin Dunbar  
Daryl Beatty  
Cliff Brown

overcome employment barriers and be contributing citizens of a vibrant and progressive Austin.

I am available for any questions or concerns you may wish to discuss.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah D. Pahl Worthington', with a wavy line extending to the right.

Sarah D. Pahl Worthington, Chair

Email: [sdpworthington@gmail.com](mailto:sdpworthington@gmail.com)

Cell: (817) 229-7868

cc: Mayor Steve Adler, Council Member Delia Garza, Council Member Sabino Renteria, Council Member Ann Kitchen, Council Member Don Zimmerman, Council Member Kathie Tovo, Council Member Sheri Gallo

# FRONT STEPS



*"Everyone deserves a safe place to call Home."*

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Many of our neighbors who are struggling with housing stability and homelessness are also struggling with income security. Ban the Box (or Fair Chance) policies stand to have an especially positive impact on our community’s ability to end homelessness, build a livable wage job market, address poverty and build a healthier, stronger Austin. A fair chance ordinance for this City will expand our ability to increase economic opportunities for all Austinites.

Thank you for considering this critical policy.

Sincerely,

Mitchell Gibbs,  
Executive Director  
Front Steps, Inc.  
512-305-4156



**Easter Seals Central Texas**  
8505 Cross Park Drive, Ste. 120  
Austin, Texas 78754  
(512) 478-2581  
(512) 476-1638 fax  
[www.centra1tx.easterseals.com](http://www.centra1tx.easterseals.com)

Dear Council Member Troxclair, Council Member Houston, Council Member Casar and Council Member Pool,

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed Fair Chance Hiring ordinance being considered by the Austin City Council Economic Opportunity Committee. This policy is an excellent way to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities without placing an undue burden on employers.

At Easter Seals Central Texas, we serve adults and children with disabilities in the Austin area through a variety of services, including direct employment and employment supports. It is a well-known fact that employment rates for people with disabilities are much lower than the general population. According to the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), 68.2% of the general US population was employed as of September 2015, compared to only 19.1% of people with disabilities. Fair Chance Hiring policies have a positive impact on people with disabilities, especially those experiencing mental illness who often cycle through the criminal justice system for minor infractions related to their disability.

A Fair Chance Hiring policy is a step in the right direction to help more people in Austin find jobs, and reduce the stigma around employing people with disabilities who may have criminal backgrounds. We encourage you to support any effort to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities, and thank you for your consideration of this very important policy. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tod Marvin', is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Tod Marvin  
President & CEO  
Easter Seals Central Texas



November 6, 2015

Greg Casar  
Council Member, District 4  
City of Austin  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, TX 78767

Dear Council Member:

On behalf of the members of AFSCME Local 1624, I commend you for sponsoring the Fair Chance Hiring Ordinance. As a small business and advocate for employees, we believe this a crucial step to reducing economic inequality and employment discrimination in the city of Austin.

Currently, few employment opportunities exist for job applicants with a criminal record who are trying to improve their lives. When applicants are immediately disqualified without consideration of their experience, skills and potential, nobody benefits. Delaying background checks until later in the hiring process will give job seekers an equal opportunity for initial consideration, while preserving an employer's right to collect background information on an applicant that is relevant to the job.

AFSCME Local 1624 supports the Fair Chance Hiring Ordinance and shares your commitment to eliminating employment discrimination and income inequality in the city of Austin.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Guthrie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.

Carol Guthrie