



Thursday, March 12, 2020

Dear members of the Georgia State Senate,

We write in support of Senate Bill 288 (LC 28 9712S), legislation that helps returning citizens gain employment and fill open positions, while ensuring employers have appropriate liability protection. The Metro Atlanta Chamber supports expanding opportunities for individuals to have their records restricted and increasing Georgia's workforce, and encourages the Georgia State Senate to pass SB 288.

These reforms will not only reduce recidivism, but they will also help our economy. Over the last 10 years Georgia's employment growth has outpaced the nation, but our state labor force growth has not kept pace and was essentially flat last winter. Georgia job postings have increased 217% since 2010, to 1.1 million from 346,350, significantly higher than the growth rate of our labor force. While this pushes the state unemployment rate down, the scarcity of available workers will impede economic growth.

Georgia employers are implementing policies and strategies to include more people with criminal records, but it is an onerous process. Many other states have enacted reforms that make it easier to hire individuals with criminal histories. In 2019, Oklahoma, Kentucky and Mississippi extended record restriction eligibility to include more felony charges; Missouri, Louisiana, North Carolina and Texas extended eligibility to include more misdemeanors. SB 288 will improve Georgia's record restriction laws, creating more opportunities for returning citizens and help fill Georgia jobs.

By passing SB 288, we will further our efforts to keep Georgia the No. 1 state in the nation in which to do business and to continue to attract and retain employers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Kirkpatrick". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Katie Kirkpatrick, P.E.
Chief Policy Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Lancaster-King". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Amy Lancaster-King
Director of Workforce Development