

THE VIRGINIA HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH PROFESSIONS

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

ON SB 826 PREDETERMINATION FOR LICENSING ELIGIBILITY; PRIOR CONVICTIONS

February 13, 2025

Awesta Sarkash, Public Policy Director, Small Business Majority

Dear Chair Price, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Awesta Sarkash and I am the Public Policy Director for Small Business Majority, an organization that empowers America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss SB 826, which would provide much-needed clarity and fairness in Virginia's occupational licensing laws by ensuring that entrepreneurs with prior convictions are not unfairly denied a license to work in their chosen profession.

Unfair occupational licensing laws often make it harder for individuals who are trying to start and grow their business. Entrepreneurs with records have already served their time and getting their licenses to become a business owner demonstrates rehabilitation and attempts at seeking stable employment. By restricting access to these licenses, these laws not only harm entrepreneurs but also deprive Virginia's local economies and reduce skilled workforces.

That's why we support SB 826. This bill would build upon national best practices by creating a predetermination process by which potential applicants with a prior criminal record can request a decision from a licensing board as to whether their specific criminal history would disqualify them from obtaining a license, before incurring potentially significant costs associated with education or training. This bill also removes remaining references to outdated terms like "moral turpitude", ensuring that adverse licensing decisions are based on specific criminal history directly related to the profession into which entry is sought. And crucially, SB 826 expands these protections to professions regulated by the Department of Health.

Virginia's entrepreneurial ecosystem would benefit from this legislation. We encourage you to vote yes on SB 826.

Sincerely,

Awesta Sarkash
Public Policy Director
Small Business Majority