

February 22, 2023

The Honorable Brian Strickland
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
324-B State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

The Honorable Bill Cowser
Vice-Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
432 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

RE: Support of SB 157 Professions and Businesses; preclearance process in the licensing of individuals with criminal records who make an application to or investigated by certain licensing boards and commissions.

Dear Chairman Strickland, Vice-Chairman Cowser, and Members of the Committee:

As a representative of Georgia's 1.2 million small businesses, Small Business Majority writes today in support of SB 157, legislation that will give Georgians a fair chance and help expand our state's skilled workforce by making it easier for entrepreneurs and jobseekers to obtain occupational licenses.

Georgia is a great place to live and work—Area Development magazine has named Georgia as the number one state for business for nine consecutive years. But like many other states, we're facing an ongoing talent shortage. To keep growing our workforce and strengthening our economy, we need to ensure we have a strong and diverse talent pool for the small businesses that call Georgia home.

This is made even more challenging by the fact that one in seven entry-level jobs in Georgia require an occupational license, including 25% of Georgia's high-demand jobs. Meanwhile, more than 4 million [Georgians](#) have a criminal record, which creates barriers to accessing professional licenses. Even when records are pardoned, or expunged, licensing applicants face barriers to obtain occupational licenses, employment opportunities and even entrepreneurship.

Fortunately, there's a solution. SB 157 will help Georgia follow the lead of other Southern states by giving all Georgians a fair chance to pursue occupational licenses and help expand Georgia's skilled workforce. SB 157 will promote employment and entrepreneurship opportunities by:

- Creating a predetermination process so people with prior criminal records can learn if their record disqualifies them before pursuing education and training.
- Ensuring boards only consider relevant convictions that are recent or serious and have not been expunged or pardoned.
- Ensuring due process protections so applicants feel heard and have a meaningful path to review decisions.

For our neighbors who have paid their debt to society and are willing and eager to work, we should create opportunities that reduce recidivism and make it easier to start or work for a small business. In fact, according to [recent polling](#) by Small Business Majority, a vast majority of Georgia small business owners (85%) support reforms that would allow people with prior convictions fairer access to occupational

licenses. Opening access to occupational licensing can address the ongoing labor shortage, grow Georgia's economy, and reduce recidivism. By taking these commonsense steps, our legislature can ensure the Peach State remains the number one state for business.

We urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to pass Senate Bill 157 to support small businesses across the state.

Sincerely,

Rachel Shanklin
Georgia Director
Small Business Majority