

HB 2250: Criminal Background Checks

Dozens of occupations in the private and public sector require a criminal background check. Home care workers; school employees; dentists; physicians; counselors and therapists; escrow agents; and funeral service providers, and even people volunteering in certain kinds of settings. Unfortunately, ***separate checks*** are required for an individual working at the same occupation for different businesses or in different counties, creating additional work. The expense and time add up to another burden on non-profit organizations, local businesses, schools, and other organizations, and of course on the applicant or volunteer.

In addition to this, there are often ***differing criteria*** for passing or failing a background check that aren't consistent across clusters of occupations, such as jobs working with children, or seniors and disabled, or with financial information. Consistency in ***fitness determinations*** across these clusters would align and **normalize criteria**.

In 2013 the legislature heard a set of bills to streamline the criminal background check process. Two of those that passed are already being implemented: electronic, or **digital, fingerprinting** is being rolled out throughout the state. And the **Voluntary Registry**, which can be used for a background check when applying for other jobs, has been designed and is in the process of being implemented.

The third is around the objective of ***portability***: the background check being "portable" from one job to another. Portability means we can avoid repeating background checks to apply for the same job with a different employer, or a similar job, or a different job but with requirements no more stringent than those for the background check already done.

The 2013 bill launched a process to standardize, as much as possible, the criteria used in evaluating applicants' background, such as lists of crimes committed, and the look-back period, or number of years since committing the crime.

This bill is another step in that effort. DAS has convened meetings with stakeholders and has identified some statutory changes that will help with standardization. This bill (HB 2250) is just another step in the process of streamlining background checks and setting up a system that is more efficient and cost-effective. It will save time and money for applicants and their employers: agencies, businesses, schools, and non-profits organizations, and it will help protect children, seniors, and other Oregonians.