

Intro: Streamlining Criminal Background Checks

Dozens of occupations in the private and public sector require a criminal background check. Like home care workers; school employees; dentists, physicians, counselors and therapists, escrow agents, and funeral service providers. 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 business, schools and other organizations

In 2012 the legislature passed HB 4091 to signal an intent to change the picture – from a disjointed set of non-coordinated and autonomous processes to something more like a system, or set of processes, that could work to protect Oregonians, work for the agencies that are engaged in that work, and help the good Oregonians trying to work at jobs that require these checks. That bill directed that a work groupⁱ be established; it was, it worked hard for several months.

HB 3330: Electronic Fingerprint Capture (sometimes called LiveScan)

The work group prepared a very useful report. It includes several recommendations to improve the background check system, including the fingerprint process. Many agencies continue to use ink and paper to capture and retain fingerprints. This can result in different quality of fingerprint records for the same individual, including smudging, smearing, and over or under inking, and all that can also increase the time to process the check.

Electronic capture is faster, cost-effective, and reliable. Electronic fingerprint image data can be transferred to the Oregon State Police in a matter of seconds, instead of the days required to send hard copy fingerprint cards through the mail, reducing cost and time for organizations and applicants. Private sector vendors can provide this service through a contract, or entities can purchase their own system to take the electronic prints themselves. This technology is already in use with some agencies (Oregon Health Authority and Department of Human Services).

Closing

This is one in the package of bills to finally make some progress in streamlining the background check process, helping government work smarter, and save time and money for Oregonians. This bill won't compromise public safety, and will improve our efforts to protect children, seniors, and other Oregonians.
