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Certification would help individuals get back on their feet *SB 690 creates means for offenders to reintegrate successfully into society*

SALEM – The Oregon Senate is leading the charge to reduce recidivism and help those who have done the time for their crimes reintegrate into society to lead productive, positive lives.

Senate Bill 690 – which passed the Senate on a bipartisan vote today – creates a Certificate of Good Standing for people who have been convicted of Class A misdemeanor or felony offenses.

“This bill provides an added assistance to those who have made mistakes in the past, paid for those mistakes through the criminal justice system and now are trying to move forward into leading productive lives,” Dembrow said. “By showing that they have met the requirements of their sentence and are staying on a positive path, they can have an opportunity to prove it when they apply for jobs, housing and other vital resources they need to complete their reentry into society. When somebody completes a sentence and then can’t get a job or find housing due to their record, there is a greater chance that they will fall back into old behaviors for a variety of reasons that could land them back in the criminal justice system. This is designed to help prevent that.”

The bill creates a simple, straight forward process for those who are eligible through the circuit court in their county. The certification helps those with criminal records, but who are meeting the terms of their sentences, have a way to show that they are on the right track. It is expected to help those individuals secure employment, housing and other basic needs.

To earn a certificate, the petitioner must meet the criminal history eligibility requirements, as well as the following criteria:

- Comply with all requirements of the sentence, including conditions of probation and any required drug or alcohol treatment, batterers' intervention, sex offender treatment, anger management or educational programs;
- At least one year has passed since the petitioner has completed all requirements of the sentence;
- The petitioner is not in violation of the conditions of any criminal sentences;
- There are no criminal charges pending; and
- The petitioner is engaged in, or seeking to engage in, a lawful occupation or activity such as employment, training, education or rehabilitative programs.

The certification proves that the person has met those requirements and protects employers from any potential liability in certain negligence actions relating to having hired the employee holding the certification. The certificate would be revoked if the holder is subsequently convicted of a felony or Class A or Class B misdemeanor, or is found to have made a misrepresentation of facts that led to the certification. The bill establishes a fine for those who knowingly present revoked or invalid certificates.

"These certificates will be vetted thoroughly by the courts and district attorneys, so that the certificate is a clear indicator to employers and landlords that the holders of these documents are making positive progress," Dembrow said. "This legislation also will help many folks get back on the tax rolls, rather than our state dollars going to sustain them while they are in jail. It gives them a path to success; it gives them hope."

Senate Bill 690 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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