

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 191

Introduced by McCollister, 20.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of universal recognition of occupational licenses on populations frequently negatively impacted by occupational licensing in the state, including, low-income workers, military members and their spouses, and those with a criminal history.

Expanding pathways to well-compensated jobs is critical for economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, professional licenses are required for nearly twenty-four percent of jobs in Nebraska, encompassing nearly two hundred different professions. Occupational licensing disproportionately affects those of lower socioeconomic status and restricts low-skill employment opportunities.

Military servicemembers, veterans, and spouses and other family members of servicemembers and veterans are acutely impacted by state occupational licensure due to their frequent movement between the several states. Occupational licensure programs have historically been poorly understood by the regulated public. Furthermore, expenditures under public contracts are often contingent on the occupational licensure of providers and implicate the efficiency of the entire state enterprise.

Likewise, Nebraskans with criminal records may face additional barriers to obtaining professional licenses that limit their economic opportunities and prevent employers from hiring qualified workers in high-demand fields.

Improving licensing access may help strengthen state and local economies, encourage migration into the state, promote successful reentry, and reduce incarceration costs.

At least ten states have passed universal recognition of licensing and over one-half of the states in the nation have adopted best practices that

provide fair licensing access for qualified individuals with criminal records while still maintaining public safety. Nebraska adopted some best practices in 2018 through the Occupational Board Reform Act. Subsequently, other states have adopted additional measures to improve licensing for justice-impacted individuals.

The issues addressed by this study shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) Best practices for the consideration of criminal history in occupational and professional licensing determinations;

(2) The extent to which current licensing policies governing the consideration of criminal history and other individual characteristics promote efficiency, economic development, public safety, and equitable, consistent, and transparent licensing outcomes; and

(3) Any substantial and demonstrated risks to public health and safety which could accrue as a result of potentially diminished standards in assorted occupations if universal recognition of occupational licenses across state lines is adopted.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, FIRST SESSION:

1. That the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.