



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**SUBMITTED BY ANA YÁÑEZ-CORREA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
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**REGARDING SENATE BILL 1750**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**APRIL 3, 2007**

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Ana Yáñez-Correa. I am the Executive Director of the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition. Thank you for allowing me to present testimony regarding Senate Bill 1750 by Chairman Whitmire.

By permitting individuals to seek gainful employment, S.B. 1750 would allow those who need work to help themselves instead of depending on the State for help. Providing opportunities for reformed individuals is the first step in promoting personal responsibility, protecting public safety, and bolstering the economy.

**WHAT DOES S.B. 1750 DO?**

S.B. 1750 by Chairman Whitmire would allow for the provisional licensure of individuals convicted of non-violent, non-sex-related felonies. The bill would not allow crimes older than 5 years to count against an individual's eligibility for professional licenses, and would allow those with a recent criminal history to be granted a 6-month temporary license on the condition that they not break laws or administrative rules and do not become revoked from parole or probation. Successful completion of the provisionary period would result in the granting of a full license, while failure to comply would result in disqualification of the license.

**OFFENDERS RETURNING TO SOCIETY NEED GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT IN ORDER TO RE-INTEGRATE AND TAKE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR LIVES AND ACTIONS.**

Texas has 168 state laws that forbid felons from obtaining jobs. Texas law also designates 1,941 individual offenses as felonies, which results in a huge felon population in Texas. In fact, approximately 1 in 11 Texas adults has a felony conviction on his/her record. These people must find jobs and housing or else risk turning to illegal activity to survive.

**LICENSING REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO A WIDE RANGE OF JOBS THAT SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO QUALIFIED EX-OFFENDERS.**

Licensing requirements are requisite for a significant number of occupations, including doctors, air conditioning and refrigeration contractors, talent agents, electricians, water well drillers, and many others.

This list is not complete, but does reveal the array of options that former offenders are arbitrarily excluded from. By expanding the range of possible vocations for ex-offenders, the State can encourage these individuals to support themselves by applying their particular skill sets, thereby reducing the likelihood that they will remain unemployed or return to crime.

**S.B. 1750 WOULD ASSIST REFORMED INDIVIDUALS IN BECOMING CONTRIBUTORS TO THEIR COMMUNITIES.**

By allowing ex-offenders to obtain provisional licenses for which they are otherwise qualified, the state can encourage personal responsibility among this population. Furthermore, allowing these individuals to participate in a licensed occupation can be critical to some communities: in a case in Livingston, the town's only locksmith was unable to serve in that position due to a misdemeanor conviction over a decade old.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the committee, and hope that you will vote to pass S.B. 1750 in order to facilitate the successful re-entry of former offenders.