



SECOND CHANCE OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING REFORM IN WISCONSIN

February 2024

In Wisconsin, state law often prevents ex-offenders from working in occupations that require a license, even if they have served their time and the crime was nonviolent.

NEARLY

1.4 million

people in Wisconsin have a criminal record.¹



OVER

6,000

people in Wisconsin are released from prison each year and reenter society.²



52% of ex-offenders in Wisconsin are arrested again

in three years following their release, often because of a failure to reintegrate into society and find a job.³



Recidivism costs Wisconsin more than

\$426

million annually.⁴



Former inmates who **stay employed for one year** post-release are

35% LESS LIKELY

to commit another crime compared to those who don't have a job.



NEARLY

1 in 5

jobs in Wisconsin requires a license.⁵



9%

States with more barriers to occupational licensing experienced a **9% increase** in recidivism rates.⁶

States with fewer barriers experienced a **2.5% decrease** in recidivism rates.⁷

2.5%



Wisconsin policymakers should support occupational licensing reforms that create a path for ex-offenders without a history of violent felonies or sexual offenses to earn a license, such as:

- ★ Extend the state's ban on blanket criminal history bans to include all licenses.
- ★ Provide denied applicants with a path to appeal a licensing board's decision.
- ★ Prohibit licensing boards from holding sealed, expunged, or vacated records against a license applicant.
- ★ Prevent licensing boards from denying a license based on vague "good moral character" or "moral turpitude" requirements.
- ★ Prevent licensing boards from denying a license to an ex-offender due to a crime committed many years ago for which the threat of recidivism is low.
- ★ Block licensing boards from denying a license to an ex-offender based on their criminal records unless the crime is directly related to the occupation.