



# SECOND CHANCE OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING REFORM IN GEORGIA

February 2024

In Georgia, 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  
**4.6** million Georgians have a criminal record—and Georgia's incarceration rate is the **third highest in the U.S.**<sup>1</sup>



OVER  
**17,000** Georgians are released from prison each year and reenter society.<sup>2</sup>



**30%** of ex-offenders in Georgia are arrested again in three years following their release, often because of a **failure to reintegrate into society and find a job.**<sup>3</sup>

Recidivism costs Georgia more than

**\$201 million annually.**<sup>4</sup>



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.<sup>5</sup>

NEARLY  
**1 in 5** jobs in Georgia requires a license.<sup>6</sup>



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

States with fewer barriers experienced a **2.5% decrease** in recidivism rates.<sup>7</sup>



Georgia 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:

- ★ Allow ex-offenders to petition a licensing board to see if they are disqualified from the license before they complete training, education, or exams.
- ★ Provide denied applicants with a path to appeal a licensing board's decision.
- ★ Require licensing boards to notify applicants of the board's decision in writing.
- ★ 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.
- ★ Prevent licensing boards from denying a license to an applicant based on an arrest that did not lead to a conviction of a crime.