

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, Senators,

Good morning. My name is Tamika Johnson. I am writing as the single parent of a young adult who has spent time in the criminal justice system in Portland, Oregon. I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 397. Having a young African American son with mental health challenges, a developmental disability, incarcerated during a global pandemic is any parents' worst nightmare. Never could I have imagined that the worst of this experience was yet to come. A felony record in the community is the true nightmare.

My son's criminal record has now been a yearlong barrier to finding employment and has caused serious stress and pain in my relationship with him. After he was released from jail, he was very dedicated to making positive changes to his future. He applied to UPS along with other reputable employers and was invited to a work orientation. He was sharing this information with his friends and family, something that he rarely does. Words can't explain the enthusiasm I seen in my son attitude while he was conversating with the salesclerk at Famous Footwear where he excitedly purchased the proper attire for the job. I don't recall another time where he was excited about his future.

The day before his scheduled work orientation, he received a message not to attend. Due to the felony on his record, he was no longer a candidate. My son has seen me work for most of his life. He understands that employment can promise a positive future. He has been told by others that he could have a successful career and raise a family working at a company such as UPS as long as he worked hard. So, you can imagine his confidence and enthusiasm for the future disappearing before his very eyes. He became distant and frustrated not understanding how he was supposed to move forward if he wasn't given a chance. He is starting to believe he is a felon.

Supporting Senate Bill 397 can help reduce multiple barriers and give more hope of a brighter future for Oregonians. Let's stop denying our neighbors that chance.

Thank you for listening to my story.