

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **HB 5973 Passes Illinois House; Remove Barriers to Licensing in 3 Occupations**

*Safer Foundation leads effort to expand  
employment opportunities for people with criminal records*

**CHICAGO- April 21, 2016.** Illinois House of Representative today passed legislation that removes barriers to employment in three fields—Barbering/Cosmetology, Roofing and Funeral Service—for people with criminal records. Proposed jointly by Safer Foundation and the Illinois Policy Institute, HB 5973 prohibits the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation from denying license applications for these occupations because of criminal offenses that are unrelated to the professions.

“For too long some industries have been allowed to deny licenses solely because something showed up on a criminal background check, even if it was not directly related and there was no threat to public safety or health. Today was a big step forward in ensuring equal employment opportunity for people with criminal records,” said Sodiqa Williams, Safer Foundation Associate Vice President, Policy & Strategy.

HB 5973, or the Occupational Licensing - Criminal Conviction Bill, received support on both sides of the aisle, passing 80-31. Safer Foundation, which drafted much of the language in the bill, led the effort with Rep. Marcus Evans and alongside the Illinois Policy Institute. The overwhelming support for the bill is further evidence of a bipartisan and bilateral movement in criminal justice reform sweeping the country.

“This is the start of a broader movement, specifically in occupational licensing reform,” said Williams. “These are professions that have average to above average job growth outlooks.”

In Illinois under current law, there are at least 118 occupation, professional and business licenses that may or must be denied to applicants with felony records. The Illinois Department of Corrections trains inmates to work in fields covered by this bill, such as barbering, but upon their release they can still be denied the necessary licenses to practice. This undermines tax dollars spent on rehabilitation.

HB 5973 outlines and simplifies procedures for licensing boards to follow when evaluating the applications of any person with a criminal record, including tracking and reporting requirements on all applications submitted. The bill also requires that if a conviction is used as a basis for rejection, the rejection must be in writing and specifically state the evidence presented and reasons for the rejection.

***About Safer Foundation:** Since 1972, Safer Foundation’s mission has focused on supporting, through a full spectrum of services, the efforts of people with criminal records to become employed, law-abiding members of the community and as a result, reduce recidivism. For more information, visit [www.saferfoundation.org](http://www.saferfoundation.org)*

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