



3555 Farnam Street #209  
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[www.seeurise.org](http://www.seeurise.org)

Chairperson Sen. Lathrop and Judiciary Committee Members  
District #12, Room 1103 State Capitol  
PO Box 94604  
Lincoln, NE 68509

January 27, 2021

RE: LB203

Dear Senator Lathrop and Judiciary Committee Members,

My name is Jasmine L. Harris. I am the Director of Public Policy & Advocacy for RISE. I request that this letter be included as part of the public hearing record that shows RISE is in support of LB203.

RISE is a non-profit that works with people who are currently and formerly incarcerated. We run a six-month program that focuses on employment readiness, character development and entrepreneurship. We serve people incarcerated at seven of the Nebraska Correctional Facilities with this program and offer reentry case management services as people return home.

Many of our program participants, who we refer to as Builders, are seeking higher education credits and certificates while incarcerated at some of our state correctional facilities. Many of these college courses are offered by Metro Community College and University of Nebraska at Omaha. The proposed legislation of LB203 will offer the opportunity for people like our Builders coming out of incarceration the opportunity to continue their higher education aspirations without having to bear the guilt and shame of checking a box on an admissions application that they have a criminal history. We are already offering college courses in the correctional facilities, which offer pro-social activities; we should not make it harder for individuals to continue their education once returning to the community. If checking a box on an application for admissions to college prevents an individual who was formerly incarcerated from moving forward with something they started while incarcerated, this would be highly regarded as a continuing of their punishment, if not cruel and unusual.

With many colleges and universities qualifying for the Second Chance Pell Grant across the nation, Metro Community College being the only Nebraska college who has received this funding, it is quite clear that higher education attainment is critical in providing skills and the opportunities for people coming out of incarceration to obtain meaningful and gainful employment. Nebraska statute 48-202 states:

Except as otherwise provided in this section, a public employer shall not ask an applicant for employment to disclose, orally or in writing, information concerning the applicant's criminal record or history, including any inquiry on any employment application, until the



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public employer has determined the applicant meets the minimum employment qualifications.

In keeping with this statute, this section should be followed when people are submitting applications for admission to colleges or universities. RISE supports LB203 and asks that committee members vote this bill out of committee to General File.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jasmine L. Harris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jasmine L. Harris, MPH, CHES  
Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, RISE