

Testimony of Congressman Doug Collins  
Hearing on the Fair Chance Act  
House Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
March 12, 2019

Chairman Cummings, Ranking Member Jordan, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. It is always good to be back in this room, with this committee, which I was a member of my first term.

I will be brief, because you've heard about the importance of the Fair Chance Act from those who spoke before me.

This legislation clearly draws broad bipartisan support, and it should. It's commonsense, and it builds on work that this chamber started last year with the First Step Act.

I worked on the First Step Act with my friend Hakeem Jeffries, and introduced it with the belief that we can and should do better when it comes to our prison system and our criminal justice system more generally.

I committed then that the First Step Act was a first step, and I would continue looking for ways to work across the aisle on issues related to the justice system, redemption, and recidivism reduction.

The Fair Chance Act is a part of that commitment, and I'm proud to be working alongside Chairman Cummings on this legislation.

The Fair Chance Act is important both in terms of what it does and in terms of the example it sets. The bill brings "ban the box" to the federal government, and prevents federal employers and contractors from asking about criminal history until the final stages of the interview and application process.

Too often, individuals who have atoned for their mistakes and served their time are automatically disqualified or overlooked because of their record. These individuals are denied a chance to rejoin and contribute to society, even though they have paid their dues. This scenario can lead to a cycle of recidivism, because an individual is unable to find work.

We can do better, and we can provide meaningful opportunities to those who have paid their dues and are seeking a second chance.

Thirty-three states—including my home state of Georgia—have "banned the box." The federal government can learn from their example, and their success.

Governor Deal, in Georgia, was a leader on issues like this, and much of what we've been able to accomplish on reform efforts in Congress has been built and modeled off of his efforts. The Fair Chance Act continues that effort.

I hope the members of this Committee—and all of my colleagues—will look at the strong, bipartisan support this bill already has, and join this effort to reduce recidivism and strengthen communities by banning the box at the federal level.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you all today, and I yield back.