



NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office

Lee Harris, Mayor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SHELBY COUNTY MAYOR LEE HARRIS' BIPARTISAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE
REFORM, "FAIR CHANCE TO SERVE," PASSED BY THE SHELBY COUNTY
COMMISSION**

***The Fair Chance to Serve ordinance, sponsored by Republican Commissioner Mick Wright
and Democratic Commissioner Van D. Turner, Jr., makes it easier for individuals with a
criminal history to serve on volunteer boards and commissions.***

Shelby County, TN – Shelby County Government's new Fair Chance to Serve ordinance removes questions about criminal histories from most applications to volunteer for county boards and commissions. The ordinance, which was sponsored by Republican Commissioner Mick Wright and Democratic Commissioner Van D. Turner, Jr., was recently approved by the Shelby County Commission.

Fair Chance to Serve is one of Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris' slate of criminal justice reforms. In 2020, the County Commission approved the Ban the Box ordinance, which removed questions about arrest and conviction histories on applications for Shelby County Government jobs.

Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris: "Shelby County is leading the nation when it comes to re-entry programming for those with a criminal history. Our new ordinance will remove barriers, like having to disclose your criminal history, in order to volunteer to serve on our boards and commissions. I believe one of the ways we can keep our community safe is by making sure we expand the opportunity for ex-offenders to reintegrate back into society. Someone who has made a mistake and has a record should not be denied or discouraged from volunteering to serve their community. When barriers to civic engagement and volunteer service are removed, we all benefit."



Shelby County Commissioner Mick Wright: “We shouldn’t make it difficult for ex-offenders to reintegrate into society. Candidates who have been through the justice system have paid their debt to society and have been thinking about ways to turn their lives around. They will bring different perspectives and expertise to serve our communities.”

Jerri Green, Policy Advisor to Mayor Lee Harris: “Similar to Ban the Box, we were very intentional about the Fair Chance to Serve ordinance. We wanted to provide opportunities for reintegration into the community for those who have arrest histories and records. It is the key to ending the public safety issue and reducing recidivism.”

Mitchell Grimm, Tennessee Higher Education in Prison Initiative (THEI) Board Member: “What is the purpose of prison? If the purpose is punishment, then when is that punishment done? If the purpose is rehabilitation, then someone who goes through the process of rehabilitation should be rehabilitated. If they are rehabilitated, then why is there a barrier to any kind of service?”

Shelby County residents can view the full list of boards and commissions and apply to serve at shelbycountyttn.gov/3095/Boards-and-Commissions----Listing.

(End of Release)