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I am honored to provide written testimony in support of an issue that is very important to me, Cascade Engineering, business in general and the State of Michigan. The issue of employing individuals formerly convicted of a crime as they return to their communities. I call these people "returning citizens" since it accurately reflects who they really are. They have served their time and paid their debt to society.

Cascade Engineering is headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, our company is comprised of eleven diversified businesses serving a wide variety of markets and geographic locations. Our markets include the transportation industry both automotive and commercial trucking, solid waste disposal and recycling, office furniture, material handling, renewable energy and water filtration.

We specialize in large scale plastic injection molding. We employ 1,200 people located in 14 facilities throughout North America and Europe. We are also one of the largest certified "B" corporations in the world and a nationally recognized proponent of sustainable business practices that emphasize the key role business can play in building financial, social and environmental capital, commonly known as the triple bottom line or TBL.

We are an Equal Opportunity Employer and the first company in the nation to adopt a stringent anti-racism policy. We strive to be an "employer of choice" in all of the communities we serve.

We define an "Employer of Choice" as:

"An organization that maintains a culture which successfully attracts, retains, and engages high performing diverse employees and stakeholders."



With this in mind, we wish to understand and confront barriers that may prevent qualified candidates for employment from successful careers at Cascade Engineering. Barriers may include sex, race, poverty, disability and of course a criminal record.

A criminal record is often an insurmountable barrier to employment. A barrier that prevents individuals from employment opportunities regardless of their efforts to seek gainful employment or the skills they may have. Many employers will not seriously consider candidates with felonies, misdemeanors, or arrest records. We believe this is not right and should not be the case.

In our company a misdemeanor, felony conviction or arrest record is not and should not be a barrier to employment. Qualified candidates are considered for employment regardless of their criminal record. We review every candidate's employment application and our decision is based solely on the specific skills and experiences of each individual in relation to the position for which they applied.

When applying for a job with us the candidate must disclose all felonies on their record. But we have decided to "Move the Box", this means we don't ask about one's criminal background on the initial application. We only ask later in the process so the conviction is not used as a pre-qualifying filter preventing employment. We only conduct a criminal background check after an offer has been made. This background check is conducted by an outside agency to document any felony convictions or pending felony charges, which may result in a conviction. If a candidate has a felony conviction or pending felony conviction, we follow the EEOC guidelines when reviewing their conviction record:

- Length of time since the conviction
- Circumstances of the offense
- Number of convictions
- Applicant's employment record since the conviction
- Rehabilitation
- Nature of the job applied for

We also consider the input of other successful re-entry employees in support or disapproval of a particular candidate.



We believe that as a partner within our community we have an obligation to consider employment for qualified returning citizens re-entering society. We believe that a person should not be forever punished with a scarlet letter. We believe in redemption, we believe in second chances, we believe that given an opportunity and tools, these human beings can rejoin our community and contribute to society. We believe that employment opportunities reduce recidivism and help keep families together. When successful we can also save the State of Michigan an estimated \$35,000 a year it costs to support a prison inmate.

We currently participate in the 30-2-2 program spearheaded by Mark Peters of Butterball Farms, also located in Grand Rapids. The goal of this program is for 30 employers to hire two returning citizens and track their performance for a two year period. The objective is to have hard data behind the successes we are witnessing.

We have some great success stories...stories in which individuals when provided an opportunity have succeeded. In many cases succeeded far beyond our expectations. We need to create more great stories! These stories begin by changing our perceptions about hiring a person formerly in prison. These stories begin by providing someone a second chance to re-engage in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Kengate Brune". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

