

Reforms Will Broaden Opportunity for Licensed Professionals

Additional changes proposed to state licensing regulations

Dover, DE – Continuing the efforts directed by Gov. Jack Markell to modernize and streamline rules and regulations for professional licensure, the Department of State released a new list of recommendations crafted to cut red tape and expand career opportunities for thousands of Delawareans.

Recommendations from the Delaware Professional Licensing Review Committee include changes to criminal history rules that currently stand in the way of employment and career advancement for professionals who have paid their debts to society. The proposed changes also seek to expand reciprocity for professionals licensed in neighboring states who wish to practice in Delaware, and broaden the authority of the Division of Professional Regulation to review and reject rules that don't serve the public interest.

“Every Delawarean deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential,” **Governor Markell said**. “Licensing requirements are important for public safety, but inappropriate rules can also create barriers to employment. We believe that government should encourage all those who wish to be contributing members of our community and that's why we've worked to support individuals on their path to enter careers in skilled professions. I appreciate the members of my cabinet, legislators, and the business community who came together to identify common sense recommendations that remove unnecessary barriers to entry, and support an open and welcoming environment for businesses and licensed professionals, while meeting our obligation to protect the public.”

[The review committee was established by Executive Order 60,](#) issued by Gov. Markell in April for the purpose of identifying certain barriers facing Delawareans who are seeking to enter licensed professions, and proposing ideas to appropriately dismantle those barriers.

“This committee took a hard look at the rules and regulations that govern how the state issues licenses for all kinds of professional fields, and we found plenty of room for changes,” said **Secretary of State Jeff Bullock**, who chaired the panel. “With the help of the next General Assembly, we can make some common-sense adjustments that will open up a whole new level of opportunity for so many people across the state who want to start or advance their careers.”

The review committee is the latest in a series of efforts from the Markell administration to ease regulatory burden on both individuals and small businesses. In 2012, Markell signed executive order 36 which required each department and agency in the Executive Branch to conduct a thorough review of all regulations in an effort to eliminate or streamline ones that were overly burdensome. This practice was made permanent when the Governor signed House Bill 147 in 2015.

While several of the changes proposed by the committee can be implemented by the Division of Professional Regulation and the various licensing boards and commissions it oversees, some of the recommendations will require legislative action to take effect.

“Government red tape should never prevent people from getting a job. The paramount goal should always be full, gainful employment,” said **Rep. Gerald Brady**, who served on the review committee. “Extending the stigmatization that accompanies a criminal conviction beyond the time and terms of the prescribed sentence is unjust, unwise, and uneconomical. Lack of full gainful employment often leads to criminal activity in the first place. I’m pleased with the results of the

committee's work, and I hope these changes make a real difference in people's lives."

"All of these reform efforts are about one thing: increasing opportunity," said **Senate Majority Whip Nicole Poore**, also a member of the committee. "Whether it's making sure Delawareans with unique skills have a better chance to earn a living or that consumers have more options for the services they rely on, expanding opportunity will have a tremendous impact on our state's economy."

"There's a thin line between 'oversight' and 'overstepping' and it's critical that as a state, we're on the right side of that line," said retired Sen. Karen Peterson, who fought for an initial round of professional licensing reforms early in her Senate career. "Good people who do good work shouldn't be prohibited from earning an honest living because of a mistake they made earlier in their life or because they got their formal training somewhere else. We now have a better balance between safety and sensibility thanks to the work of this committee and buy-in from the Governor's Office."

In addition to state officials and legislators, the Professional Licensing Review Committee also included members from regulated professions and community organizations.

"Under the leadership of Gov. Markell, Delaware has made enormous progress towards removing debilitating systemic barriers for individuals returning from incarceration," said committee member **Charles A. Madden, executive director of the Wilmington HOPE Commission**. "These recommendations represent yet another significant act by the Markell administration to allow Delawareans the opportunity to rebuild their lives and pursue fulfilling careers – careers that help to restore their personal dignity, the opportunity to provide for their families, and their ability to contribute to the rebuilding of their communities."

“We want Delaware to be in the business of granting people opportunities to pursue their career goals, not limiting them with onerous rules and regulations,” said committee member **Nello Paoli Jr., president of Preferred Electric Inc. in New Castle.** “Better standards lead to better education, which leads to better economic opportunities.”