

# Sen. Darling: Occupational license reform can change lives

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CONTACT: Senator Alberta Darling (R-River Hills), 1-608-266-5830  
State Representative Warren Petryk (R-Eleva), 608-266-0660

Madison – [According to the National Institute of Justice](#), surveys of ex-offenders show between 60 and 75 percent of ex-offenders are jobless up to a year after release. A bill authored by State Senator Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) and Representative Warren Petryk (R-Eleva) will give ex-offenders a chance at a new life.

“Jobs are a proven way to reduce recidivism,” Darling said, “Our laws currently stop many individuals with a criminal record from receiving an occupational license. This means many family-supporting careers are off limits to those who are trying to turn their lives around.”

The bill creates a process where an ex-offender can petition a state agency to see if they are eligible for a license. They would be able to receive an individualized review of their history when they apply and show evidence of rehabilitation. If they are denied a license, the agency would have to send a written rationale to the applicant.

The bill does not affect private employers. People convicted of violent felonies, and crimes against children, are excluded from this bill.

“Workforce development is about creating opportunities for people to get back to work and remain employed,” Petryk said, “This legislation will offer those with criminal records an opportunity to secure meaningful employment that will change their troubled path, which we know reduces the likelihood of recidivism.”

Both authors are currently seeking co-sponsors for the legislation.