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House District 18 – Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Muldoon, & Government Hill

House Bill 81 – Access to Marijuana Conviction Records

Sponsor Statement

In 2014, the state of Alaska voted to legalize the cultivation, sale, and recreational use of marijuana for adults. Despite this change in state law, some Alaskans remain blocked from employment, housing, volunteering, licensing, and other opportunities. Hardworking Alaskans could automatically be denied a chance because of previous low level marijuana convictions and employers are potentially deprived of skilled labor in an increasingly dwindling labor market.

House Bill 81 would make minor marijuana related convictions on an individual's record confidential if they fit certain criteria. The individual must have been 21 years of age or older at the time of the crime and not convicted of another crime in the same incident. The individual must also request that those records be made confidential on background checks from the Department of Public Safety until the Department amends the records.

The State cannot afford to pass on skilled labor simply because low level misdemeanors are hindering some Alaskans from pursuing those positions or from finding housing closer to better opportunities. This bill will help individuals keep portions of their record confidential while still allowing government agencies access for background and statistical information.

Hardworking Alaskans must be given a chance to find redemption for small mistakes and be given the opportunity to make an economic impact like any other citizen. Over 25 other states have already enacted laws that help individuals with low level marijuana crimes on their record and more states are currently working on similar legislation. The Alaska Supreme Court has already made a rule change that takes low level marijuana possession off of the public CourtView system. It's time the legislature made a move to give Alaskans a chance to succeed.