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PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Urban League of Portland field organizer Nyanga Uuka (from left), Jefferson High School student Llonyn Elliott, and Midge Purcell, the Urban League's director of advocacy and public policy, campaign in front of City Hall for a local ordinance to regulate the job application process to help with people with criminal records find work again.

Job Barrier TARGET

'Ban the Box' aimed at
second chance success

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A proposed new ordinance that would prevent private employers from considering a job candidate's criminal history during the initial application and interview process is gaining support throughout Portland.

A turning point in the "Ban the Box" campaign came when Mayor Charlie Hales met with supporters of the ordinance marching outside of City Hall last Wednesday just before a public hearing on the issue inside.

Midge Purcell, director of advocacy and public policy for the Urban League of Portland, delivered hundreds of signatures to Hales, all in support of the proposal.

Emmanuel Price, a member of the African American community in Portland and chief executive officer of Second Chances Are For Everyone, waited in line for a chance to speak to the Mayor and to testify at the hearing.

"I was once in trouble too," he said. "I work so hard now, to take responsibility for what happened, but also to make the best of my life after my conviction."

Employment is one of the most important influences for decreasing recidivism. Two years after release, people who are gainfully employed are twice as likely to avoid getting into trouble with the law again, compared to their unemployed counterparts, according to the advocates.

A steady job not only provides financial resources, but also connections to a new community that can help reduce the risk of recidivism, leaders of the ban the box movement said.

"I served close to five years in Oregon Correctional facilities," said Price. "It's been 10 years now since I returned to society and I still struggle with finding employment. Not because I'm ill equipped or not qualified, but because my back-

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