When someone is released from prison, they’ve done their time, they’ve paid their debt to society, and it should be time for them to re-integrate themselves into society.

However, felons and other former prisoners face discrimination almost everywhere they turn, from housing, to employment, to job retraining and higher education.

While discrimination for almost anything else is illegal, in most states it is legal for employers or other entities to question people about their criminal backgrounds and discriminate against them for that reason alone.

It would be fair for a bank to not hire a person because they recently committed fraud. However, it would be unfair for that bank to not hire the person because they committed a felony assault during a bar fight in college.

It is even possible for a business to reject someone for having been arrested but not charged with a crime.

If someone has been released from prison, it should mean that they are ready to re-integrate into society. Thus, there should be no reason for so many applications to ask about a person’s criminal history.

Restricting the jobs a person can have and the places they can live does no favors to anyone.

If a person cannot find legitimate employment that pays their bills, committing crimes in order to have a more comfortable existence becomes more likely.

If a person is restricted in renting or buying a home, they are more likely to live in higher crime areas.

Returning to an environment with more criminal activity makes a return to crime more likely for the person.

If a person’s application to an institution of higher education is denied, they will not be able to improve their job prospects with an education, and the menial jobs they can do often give way to reoffending.

While the U.S. criminal justice system has huge flaws, such as lack of emphasis on rehabilitation, overcrowding, mass incarceration, a lack of support services once offenders are released, and more, the blame for high rates of recidivism does not just lay with the criminal justice system.

American society has a problem accepting people released from prison back into society and allowing them to reintegrate.

The not-in-my-back-yard mentality very much applies here, while people may understand that former prisoners need homes and work, they don’t want it to be near them.

Everybody makes mistakes, but most everyone deserves a second chance. Especially if that second chance reduces the likelihood of that person committing further crimes