In Virginia, an occupational license can open the door to a variety of opportunities for employment. Overall, 20% of the state's workforce is licensed - the 19th highest percentage in the nation. Although a criminal record can significantly limit a person's employment options, paradoxically, employment has been shown to significantly decrease the risk of recidivism. According to one study, states with fewer licensing restrictions see, on average, a 2.5% decline in recidivism compared to states with stricter licensing laws. Additionally, increasing pathways to occupational licensing for those with criminal records has the possibility to strengthen Virginia's economy. One study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research estimated that employment barriers for the formerly incarcerated costs the national economy up to $87 billion in annual Gross Domestic Product.