Ordinance amending the Police Code to prohibit private post-secondary educational institutions from using an application form that contains questions about an applicant's criminal history, or asking U.S. applicants an applicant about criminal history for the purpose of deciding whether to offer admission; requiring educational institutions to retain relevant records for three years; authorizing the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement to investigate possible violations and impose penalties; and providing for a private right of action.

NOTE: Unchanged Code text and uncodified text are in plain Arial font. Additions to Codes are in single-underline italics Times New Roman font. Deletions to Codes are in strikethrough italics Times New Roman font. Board amendment additions are in double-underlined Arial font. Board amendment deletions are in strikethrough Arial font. Asterisks (*) indicate the omission of unchanged Code subsections or parts of tables.

Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. The Police Code is hereby amended by adding Article 50, consisting of Sections 5001, 5002, 5003, 5004, 5005, 5006, 5007, 5008, and 5009, to read as follows:

ARTICLE 50: CRIMINAL HISTORY IN ADMISSION

TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

SEC. 5001. TITLE.

This Article 50 may be referred to as the "Beyond the Box in College Admissions Ordinance."
SEC. 5002. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) Around the country, individuals are often plagued by old or minor arrest or conviction records that discourage them from applying for educational opportunities because a “box” on the application requires disclosure of criminal history information that may exclude them from consideration. Research indicates that the collection and use of criminal history information in the application process for post-secondary institutions constitutes a formidable barrier for many individuals with criminal records. Specifically, data suggests that pre-admission inquiries for prior felony convictions is associated with application attrition on college applications.

(b) The federal government and the higher education industry have acknowledged this problem. In 2016, the Obama Administration encouraged higher education institutions throughout the country to take the Fair Chance Higher Education Pledge to develop practices to provide formerly incarcerated individuals with a fair shot at educational opportunities. Similarly, the United States Department of Education released a resource guide titled “Beyond the Box,” which provided information for colleges to examine and remove barriers to pursuing a higher education for citizens with criminal records. Several postsecondary educational institutions have voluntarily removed questions about criminal history from their admissions procedures, and The Common Application, Inc., has announced that it will soon allow its member institutions to omit criminal history questions from their applications.

(c) In California, it is estimated that approximately eight million Californians have been arrested or convicted. Thousands of people in our local community are directly impacted by barriers to full reintegration into society based on these records. Pre-admission inquiries into prior felony convictions also magnify racial disparities in the criminal justice system, resulting in a particularly negative impact on applicants of color seeking admission to post-secondary educational institutions.

(d) Because a post-secondary education is a key to labor market success, policies that increase educational opportunities for people with arrest and conviction records reduce recidivism, promote the
financial stability of our communities, and enhance the City’s potential for economic growth. Policies that encourage reintegration and reduce recidivism can also help reduce criminal justice costs. The San Francisco Sheriff’s Office predicts it will spend approximately $90,000 to incarcerate persons in jail in 2017-2018. When a person successfully reintegrates and does not return to the criminal justice system, these costs are avoided, allowing scarce public dollars to be reinvested in programs that make our communities stronger and safer.

(e) Many cities and counties in the United States, including San Francisco, have regulated inquiries into criminal history in other contexts, such as in housing and employment decisions. In the higher education context as well, San Francisco should lead the nation in curbing such inquiries. By addressing roadblocks in the pathways to achieving a higher education, this Article 50 will support individuals that have paid their debt to society and served their sentences by assuring them an equal chance to learn and thrive in society. Prohibiting pre-admission inquiries on college applications will provide youth and adults who have been subject to the criminal justice system a fair chance to realize their full potential and become contributing members of society. Given these considerations, it is wise public policy – in the context of the criminal justice system, public health and safety, and the economy – to improve access to post-secondary institutions for individuals with prior arrest or conviction records.

SEC. 5003. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Article 50, the following definitions apply:

“Admit” or “Admission” means a College’s invitation to an Applicant to enroll in the College, including a conditional or deferred invitation, or a decision to place an Applicant on the College’s waitlist.

“Agency” means the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement, or any successor department or office.
“Applicant” means (a) a person who has applied for admission to a College; or (b) a person who has inquired about admission to a College, but only where the inquiry relates to the inquiring party’s possible admission to the College, not to inquiries made on behalf of another person.

“Arrest” means questioning, apprehending, taking into custody or detention, holding for investigation, charging, indicting, or trying, a person for any felony, misdemeanor, or other criminal offense. “Arrest” includes these actions only when conducted by a law enforcement officer.

“College” means any private post-secondary educational institution located in San Francisco that awards degrees signifying satisfactory completion of the requirements of a postsecondary educational program at the associate’s level or above. “College” does not include institutions that are part of the State of California, including City College of San Francisco, San Francisco State University, and the University of California.

“Conviction” means an adjudication (following a trial, guilty plea, or no-contest plea) that a person was guilty of any felony or misdemeanor. “Conviction” includes: (a) an adjudication that a person was guilty in a juvenile proceeding of, or had a juvenile petition sustained in connection with, any felony or misdemeanor; and (b) convictions that have been judicially dismissed, expunged, voided, invalidated, or otherwise rendered inoperative, by way of example but not limitation, under California Penal Code Sections 1203.4, 1203.4a, or 1203.41.

“Criminal History” means an Applicant’s record of Arrest or Conviction.

“Director” means the Director of the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement, or the Director’s designee.

SEC. 5004. PROHIBITION ON INQUIRING ABOUT CRIMINAL HISTORY IN ADMISSIONS DECISIONS.

(a) A College may not, for the purpose of considering whether to Admit an Applicant, inquire about the Applicant’s Criminal History, such as by making any direct or indirect statement, question,
prompting, or other communication, orally or in writing, personally or through an agent, using any
mode of communication, including, but not limited to, application forms and interviews. “Inquire,” as
used in this subsection (a), includes providing, or directing the Applicant to, an application form that is
subsequently viewed by an Applicant. This subsection (a) applies to application forms devised or
administered by third parties that Colleges use for the purpose of considering whether to Admit the
Applicant.

(b) As subsection (a) indicates, a College may not use application forms that contain a request
for information about the Applicant’s Criminal History. A College is in violation of this Article 50 if it
makes any such application form available to the general public or to potential Applicants in any
format, including but not limited to, posting it on the College’s website, or distributing paper copies.

(c) Nothing in this Article 50 prohibits an Applicant from voluntarily, and without prompting,
disclosing the Applicant’s Criminal History.

(d) A College that receives Criminal History from a person or entity other than the Applicant is
not in violation of this Article 50 if the College did not receive the information in response to an inquiry
about the Applicant’s Criminal History for the purpose of considering whether to Admit the Applicant.

(e) Nothing in this Article 50 prohibits a College from requesting, or obtaining, Criminal
History from an Applicant after an Applicant has accepted Admission and agreed to enroll in the
College, but Colleges are strongly encouraged to limit inquiry and subsequent use of the
information to the following purposes:

(1) Offering counseling or support services;

(2) Making decisions about the Applicant’s eligibility to participate in activities
and aspects of campus life, such as housing; and

(3) Making decisions about the Applicant’s eligibility for financial aid or
scholarships.
(f) Nothing in this Article 50 prohibits a College from, at any time, inquiring about Criminal History when an Applicant has applied to an educational program in a field in which federal or state licensing requirements restrict persons with Criminal History from employment or licensing, as long as the inquiry and subsequent use of the information is limited to the purpose of advising Applicants that their Criminal History may limit the Applicant’s ability to:

1. Participate in educational requirements, such as clinical practice;
2. Obtain employment; and
3. Receive professional or occupational licenses or admissions.

(g) Nothing in this Article 50 prohibits a College from, at any time, inquiring about Criminal History for the purpose of deciding whether to Admit an Applicant who will require, in order to enroll, the College to provide a Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status.

SEC. 5005. IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT.

(a) The Agency is authorized to take appropriate steps to enforce and coordinate enforcement of this Article 50, including the investigation of possible violations of this Article.

(b) An Applicant or any other person may report to the Agency any suspected violation of this Article 50. The Agency shall encourage reporting pursuant to this subsection (b) by keeping confidential, to the maximum extent permitted by applicable laws, the name and other identifying information of the Applicant or person reporting the violation; provided, however, that the Agency may disclose the name and identifying information of the Applicant or person as necessary to enforce this Article 50 or for other appropriate purposes.

(c) The Director shall establish rules governing the administrative process for determining and appealing violations of this Article 50. The rules shall include procedures for providing the College with the following:
(1) Notice that it may have violated this Article 50;

(2) A right to respond to the notice;

(3) Notice of the Agency’s determination of a violation; and

(4) An opportunity to appeal the Agency’s determination to a hearing officer, who is appointed by the Controller.

(d) If the College appeals the Agency’s determination of a violation, the Agency’s determination shall be considered prima facie evidence of a violation, and the College shall have the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the Agency’s determination of a violation is incorrect. The hearing officer’s decision of the appeal shall constitute the City’s final decision.

(e) The Agency may impose upon the College an administrative penalty of $250 for each Applicant as to whom a violation of Section 5004(a) occurred.

(f) The Agency may impose upon the College an administrative penalty of $250 for each day a violation of Section 5004(b) occurred or continued.

(g) The City Attorney may bring a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction against a College for violating any requirement of this Article 50, and, upon prevailing, shall be entitled to such legal or equitable relief as may be appropriate to remedy the violation, including a civil penalty, and shall be awarded reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs.

(h) In any administrative or civil action brought under this Article 50, the Agency or court, as the case may be, shall award interest on all amounts due and unpaid at the rate of interest specified in subdivision (b) of Section 3289 of the California Civil Code.

(i) In the event the City brings a civil enforcement action for violation of this Article 50, any person or association by or with a direct interest in compliance with this Article may join in that enforcement action as a real party in interest. In the event the City does not institute a civil enforcement action for violation of this Article, a directly interested person or association, after receiving confirmation from the City Attorney that the City does not intend to institute a civil suit, may
bring a civil proceeding on its own behalf and on behalf of the City against that College and seek all remedies available for violation of this Article available under state law, including but not limited to monetary, injunctive, and declaratory relief. Should actual damages incurred by such a violation be difficult to determine, liquidated damages may be awarded at the rate of $1,000 per day of violation, to be distributed equally between a private plaintiff, if any, and the general fund of the City, unless such liquidated damages award is found to be so excessive in relation to the violator's resources as to constitute a penalty.

(j) The Director shall have authority to adopt regulations or guidelines that implement the provisions of this Article 50.

(k) The remedies, penalties, and procedures provided under this Article 50 are cumulative of any other remedies, penalties, or procedures that may be available to address conduct that is violative of this Article.

SEC. 5006. RECORDKEEPING REQUIREMENTS.

(a) Subject to the exceptions noted in subsection (b), Colleges shall retain, for a period of three years:

(1) Completed applications, if they contain questions about Criminal History;

(2) Incomplete applications, if they contain questions about Criminal History;

(3) And any other pertinent data and records about each Applicant; and blank application forms and other admissions documents that reflect questions posed to Applicants for a period of three years from the last use of the form or document, regardless of whether the form contains questions about Criminal History; and

(4) Any other records about the Applicant, if they contain questions about Criminal History or other evidence of the College's noncompliance with Section 5004.
(b) The recordkeeping requirements in subsection (a) do not require Colleges to retain documents that an Applicant submitted along with the Application, such as artwork portfolios, letters of recommendation, test scores, or essays, regardless of whether they reference Criminal History.

(bc) Colleges shall allow the Agency access to such records, with appropriate notice and at a mutually agreeable time, to monitor compliance with the requirements of this Article 50.

(ed) It is recommended, but not required, that Colleges retain, for a period of three years, applications that were begun but not completed.

(ee) Colleges shall provide information to the Agency, or the Agency's designee, as may be required to verify the College's compliance with this Article 50.

(ef) In no event shall the Agency require a College to provide any information or documents the disclosure of which would violate state or federal law.

(fg) Where a College does not maintain or retain adequate records documenting compliance with this Article 50 or does not allow the Agency reasonable access to such records, it shall be presumed that the College did not comply with this Article, absent clear and convincing evidence otherwise.

(gh) Pursuant to its rulemaking authority under this Article 50, the Agency shall adopt rules that establish procedures for Employers to maintain and retain accurate records and to provide annual reporting of compliance to the Agency in a manner that does not require disclosure of any information that would violate State or Federal privacy laws.

SEC. 5007. PREEMPTION.

The City recognizes that in some circumstances state or federal law may govern some of the matters addressed in this Article 50. Nothing in this Article shall be interpreted or applied by a court or the Agency or any other part of City government so as to create any requirement, power, or duty in
conflict with federal or state law or with a requirement of any government agency, including any agency of City government, implementing federal or state law. Consistent with the foregoing preemption principle, for example, the Agency is authorized to not enforce any provision of this Article upon determining that its application in a particular context would conflict with federal or state law or with a requirement of a government agency implementing federal or state law. Further, this Article does not prevent Colleges from inquiring about Criminal History where such inquiry is required by federal or state law or a government agency implementing federal or state law, but this Article does require that such an inquiry be limited to those aspects of inquiries regarding Criminal History that are necessary to comply with federal or state law. These examples are illustrative and do not limit the scope of the preemption principle stated in this Section 5007.

SEC. 5008. SEVERABILITY.

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this Article 50, or any application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a decision of a court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions or applications of the Article. The Board of Supervisors hereby declares that it would have passed this Article and each and every section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, and word not declared invalid or unconstitutional without regard to whether any other portion of the Article or application thereof would be subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional.

SEC. 5009. CONSTRUCTION.

(a) This Article 50 shall not be construed to require a College to give preference to or admit a student with a Criminal History. Moreover, this Article shall not be construed to limit a College’s discretion to choose its students from applicants, consistent with existing law and with this Article.
Section 2. Effective Date; Operative Date.

(a) This ordinance shall become effective 30 days after enactment. Enactment occurs when the Mayor signs the ordinance, the Mayor returns the ordinance unsigned or does not sign the ordinance within ten days of receiving it, or the Board of Supervisors overrides the Mayor's veto of the ordinance.

(b) This ordinance shall become operative on August 1, 2019.
File Number: 181002  Date Passed: December 11, 2018

Ordinance amending the Police Code to prohibit private post-secondary educational institutions from using an application form that contains questions about an applicant's criminal history, or asking U.S. applicants about criminal history for the purpose of deciding whether to offer admission; requiring educational institutions to retain relevant records for three years; authorizing the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement to investigate possible violations and impose penalties; and providing for a private right of action.

November 28, 2018 Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee - AMENDED, AN AMENDMENT OF THE WHOLE BEARING NEW TITLE

November 28, 2018 Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee - RECOMMENDED AS AMENDED

December 04, 2018 Board of Supervisors - PASSED ON FIRST READING
   Ayes: 10 - Brown, Cohen, Kim, Mandelman, Peskin, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, Tang and Yee
   Excused: 1 - Fewer

December 11, 2018 Board of Supervisors - FINALLY PASSED
   Ayes: 11 - Brown, Cohen, Fewer, Kim, Mandelman, Peskin, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, Tang and Yee
I hereby certify that the foregoing Ordinance was FINALLY PASSED on 12/11/2018 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

London N. Breed
Mayor

12/21/18
Date Approved