



TESTIMONY ON

House Bill 263 – Fresh Start Act
House Commerce and Labor Committee
Ohio Legislature

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

Roy Lenardson
Opportunity Solutions Project

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Dean, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 263 – the Fresh Start Act.

My name is Roy Lenardson, and I am with the Opportunity Solutions Project. OSP is a nonpartisan, multi-state advocacy organization that seeks to improve lives by promoting work.

HB 263 or the Fresh Start Act updates Ohio’s laws governing how boards consider applicants with criminal records.

While, the specifics in the bill are very well outlined in the analysis, I would like to offer a more philosophical argument for why I think HB 263 is so important to folks here in Ohio.

Work, or more importantly, the ability to work, is a cornerstone in building the American Dream. The path to success in is very clear: A first job, education or training, another job, a promotion, a family, a home – and while your path to achieving success in America may take different twists and turns – work is at the core of that success.

HB 263 recognizes the importance of work and strives to make it clear to the gatekeepers – those empowered to issue licenses here in Ohio -- that the power to issue licenses should not be about creating barriers – but should strike the right balance between encouraging work while protecting the safety of the public.

So that’s why I think HB 263 is such a great idea – it gives folks right here in Ohio -- a second chance to experience the power of work and it keeps in place the ability for those issuing licenses to protect the public safety. Except now, these boards will have to be specific about why any barriers to work exist and removes those barriers where they are not needed.

There are two other things about HB 263 I would like to highlight:

First, this will reduce dependency on welfare programs – which saves the taxpayers money and protects your safety net for those who are unable to work – the truly needy.

Second, this bill will increase job opportunities for former felons and in turn they will be much less likely to head back to prison – which saves taxpayers even more money. In fact, states that make it easier for those with records to work see lower recidivism rates. Since incarceration costs over \$80 billion a year in the United States, any reform that lowers recidivism helps taxpayers.

So – in summary – I am here today in support of HB 263 because it encourages work, keeps the restrictions in place when the public safety is at risk, keeps people out of prison, reduces welfare dependency and saves Ohio taxpayers money.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions.