

Thank you Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Criminal Justice committee for allowing me to provide my testimony today.

HB 87 proposes that a change be made to the current law allowing a drug charge to be expunged if it is coupled with and OVI if the applicant completes the terms of the ILC program. The bill does not ask that the OVI be expunged, just the drug charges. This change is important to first time offenders, especially first-time offenders who have made changes to their life since their arrest, and years later this remains their only offense.

I have dozens of friends that come from different socio-economic backgrounds, races, genders, and ages whose lives have been permanently affected. People graduating from college are finding it difficult to get jobs because the charges are on their record. This impacts thousands of Ohio residents. In my support group alone, there are dozens of people, of all ages, in the same situation. They did what was asked of them by the court and still have the charges on their record.

This situation is not unique to me. When I encountered my legal issues, I had to really look at myself and where my life was going. I went to rehab, started going back to and excelling in school and worked hard to complete the payments and other terms of my probation early. I also actively participate in a program that allowed me to make amends to those I have harmed and help individuals who suffer from the same problems I have. I graduate from Wright State University in May. I haven't consumed alcohol or done drugs since November 17 2015.

In connection with my support group, I have traveled all around the country and have gone to conferences with people just like myself, who learned their lesson from their first charge and have been doing the right thing since. They completed the terms of their ILC program only to find out that they cannot get their felony drug charges expunged. This results in their inability to get a job, loan, or get into a school that they may need or deserve.

I have applied for jobs where a background check was done or I was forthright with the employer about my history and what may show up on the background check and it has impacted my ability to get the job. These are charges I received in 2015, and even though I have been sober and doing the right thing for over 3 years it still impacts my life and my future.

In the future I plan on having a family that I will need to support. I feel as though I am in a helpless situation that will never get any better as long as these charges are on my record. While my life has gotten significantly better since I have been in recovery it feels all for not if I cannot get a job.

This is a real problem that is impacting the future of thousands of Ohioans. The ILC program is there to help but without this change it is of little or no value. I hope you will support this bill and allow those that are making every effort to build a future to do so. Without this change people are unfortunately one and done with limited opportunities for their future.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of HB 87. I welcome and would be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.