



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

**Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 1
Before the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee**

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Chair Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding House Bill 1, record sealing, and treatment in lieu of conviction.

My name is Daniel J. Dew, and I am a legal fellow at **The Buckeye Institute's** Legal Center, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

Thank you for your longstanding commitment to pursuing a smart criminal justice policy that will balance due process, individual freedom, and society's inherent need for vigorous criminal law enforcement.

Usually, I offer testimony citing facts and figures, and I quote from various reports and **studies** published by The Buckeye Institute explaining the benefits of criminal justice reform. But others have already provided this Committee with data and academic arguments for expanding record sealing and treatment in lieu of conviction opportunities in Ohio. So instead, allow me to share a personal story to illustrate the significance of these reforms in your constituents' lives.

As the Committee is aware, even after a person has paid his debt to society, he often still faces barriers to employment, housing, and schooling. A few years ago, a young man approached me at church. He and his wife had attended our congregation for several years and I had gotten to know them well. They were expecting their first child, and the young man was about to graduate from a local state university where he had studied power plant technology. It took him a while to muster the courage, but eventually, with tears in his eyes, he told me that he was applying for jobs at power plants, but could not be hired because of a four-year-old misdemeanor marijuana conviction on his record. He asked if there was anything I could do to help him.

As he and his wife were starting their family, he looked to provide a steady and sufficient income—with very important health benefits—in a profession that he had spent years training for. All of that was now in doubt because of a youthful mistake that plagued him. Fortunately, we were able to seal his record relatively quickly. He now has a great job as a power plant electrician, and he and his wife have two beautiful children.

But not everyone has access to *pro bono* legal help. Not everyone has only a minor misdemeanor to seal. That is why the provisions in House Bill 1 that will expand eligibility and lower the wait-time for record-sealing are so important.

As Ohio continues to reform its criminal justice system, its record-sealing policies, and its treatment in lieu of conviction protocols, our citizens who have paid their debts to society will see more doors open for them as they begin their careers and start their families. Your willingness to pursue such reforms has not gone unnoticed. The Buckeye Institute applauds your efforts and stands ready to help at your request.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.

About The Buckeye Institute

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