



**Representative Michael E. Henne**  
**Ohio House District 40**

Sponsor Testimony – HB 583

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Riedel, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB 583, Licensing Reform.

One of the best ways to limit recidivism in our State is by providing work opportunities for those recently released from prison. Not only is it in the individual's best interest, but the public's best interest as well. Nearly 60% of people remain unemployed one year after incarceration, and Ohio spends \$1.8 billion on corrections annually. We need to eliminate the barriers that are preventing people from gaining employment upon re-entry.

With tens of thousands of licensing restrictions in place in Ohio, we are preventing rather than providing opportunities for people through local licensing fees. For example, in Canton to become a general contractor, plumber, or electrician you need to pay an additional \$225. To be a plumber in Dayton costs an additional \$250 to work, and that expense rises to \$350 for already state-licensed contractors in Columbus. Each of these individuals already have a state license but for some reason these cities pile on an additional license and barrier. These fees are designed to protect special interests, not safety.

Local governments should not be able to create new licenses to the detriment of people needing a job. In this regard, HB 583 will eliminate local license fees that are already regulated at the state level. The legislation does not prevent licensing boards from disqualifying individuals with criminal records that pose a direct threat to public safety from working in certain occupations, nor does it allow individuals with felony convictions from working as pharmacy technicians. What the bill does is lower the barriers of entry to meaningful work for people that deserve a second chance.

Research indicates if a non-violent offender is crime-free for three to four years, they are no more likely to commit a crime than the average person. Ex-offenders do not need welfare or hoops to jump through; they need work. Similar legislation to HB 583 has already passed in Wisconsin and Tennessee. What HB 583 aims to do is provide individuals a route to employment, not dependency on the government or a path back to crime.

At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee has.

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