



## **FAITH & FREEDOM COALITION**

**Testimony  
Before the Ohio House of Representatives  
Criminal Justice Committee**

***Public Hearing on OH H.B. 460,  
Getting Rehabilitated Ohioans Working (GROW) Act***

**Testimony by  
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Thank you, Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Willaims, Ranking Member Brown and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Patrick Purtill, and I am Director of Legislative Affairs for the Faith & Freedom Coalition and the Charles Evans Hughes Lecturer at Colgate University. Prior to my current positions, I was Special Assistant to the U.S. Deputy Attorney General and served on the Attorney General’s Prisoner Reentry Working Group, the President’s Prisoner Reentry Initiative Group, and the Strategic Management Council’s Subcommittee on Violent Crime and Gangs.

On behalf of the 2.5 million members and supporters of the Faith & Freedom Coalition nationwide, I want to thank you for considering HB 460 offered by Representatives Hillyer and Seitz and urge you to report this bill out of Committee quickly and favorably for consideration by the full House. This legislation will reduce recidivism, increase employment, strengthen families and communities, and provide a pathway to redemption for those who want to reform their lives.

No one would deny that crime should be punished; but punishment should not continue in perpetuity. Those who have paid their debt to society for low-level or non-violent offenses and who have reformed their lives deserve to be given a second chance and fully welcomed back into society. Rehabilitation is the goal of the criminal justice system. We want offenders to pay their debts and to amend their lives. Those who do, should be rewarded, and restored to society—for their good, their families’ benefit, and for the betterment of our communities.

Why is sealing and expungement so important? The answer is that it promotes public safety by increasing and improving employment for persons with criminal records—which is one in three Ohioans. Meaningful work is the surest route to successfully re-enter society, support your family, and remain law abiding. And as many states are experiencing, workforce shortages are leading to decreased productivity and output resulting in lower economic growth.

In particular, H.B. 460 does two important things to improve Ohio's current laws.

First, it modernizes Ohio's procedures to simply automate the process of sealing or expunging criminal records that can already be sealed or expunged by court petition under Ohio law. Like Ohio, many states allow individuals to petition the courts to have their records sealed. The problem is that the process can be expensive, time consuming and intimidating for many eligible Ohioans which is why so few people take advantage of it. Automating this process rewards staying crime-free after release and gets more people into the workforce at a time when many positions go unfilled across sectors.

Many states have already successfully implemented these policies including Pennsylvania (2018) and its expansion (2023), as well as Utah (2019), Michigan (2020), Oklahoma (2022), and Colorado (2022), to name a few. We expect this number to continue to grow in the next few years and would urge Ohio to be next on this list.

Secondly, H.B. 460 protects employers from liability for claims of negligent hiring and supervision based on a sealed or expunged criminal record. No criminal record that has been sealed or expunged can be used as evidence in any negligence claim against the employer. By providing this immunity to employers, H.B. 460 incentivizes employment, which increases public safety. A criminal record reduces the odds of getting a callback or job offer by nearly 50 percent. This is at a time when the Bureau of Labor Statistics consistently reports low unemployment rates and that businesses, especially small and family-owned businesses, are having a difficult time filling job openings. Removing the threat of frivolous lawsuits will make it easier for Ohio's small and family-owned businesses to hire the workers they need to expand.

The practical, real-world benefits of record sealing are well documented. It:

- Increases the workforce, including many skilled workers.
- Increases Employment opportunities with better wages and benefits.
- Leads to Stronger credit ratings.
- Better and Safer housing options.
- More stable families and safer communities.
- Significant incentives to remain crime-free.

I urge you to report H.B. 460 out quickly and favorably of this Committee and send it to the full House.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your thoughtful consideration.

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