

HB 460 – Getting Rehabilitated Ohioans Working (GROW) Act Proponent Testimony

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Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 460, which provides certain rehabilitated offenders increased workforce placement opportunity by sealing their record.

My name is Alexandra Denney and I am the Vice President of Government Relations and Communications for the Ohio Business Roundtable, a statewide business association comprised of CEOs and presidents of the top companies in the state. We currently have over 115 members, collectively employing over 600,000 Ohioans and generating a revenue of more than \$2.5 trillion, which contributes significantly to Ohio's economy.

Our membership includes industry leading companies representing over 20 Ohio industries, including—but not limited to—companies such as KeyBank and Huntington in the banking sector; American Financial and Nationwide in the insurance sector; Kokosing in construction; CareSource, Cleveland Clinic, and many of Ohio's children's hospitals in healthcare; Owens Corning, RPM International, Inc., and Procter & Gamble in manufacturing; AEP and Marathon in energy and utilities, among others.

The Ohio Business Roundtable focuses on policies that will strengthen our state's economic and workforce development, reduce onerous barriers for businesses, and foster an environment for businesses to invest and grow in Ohio while competing in the global economy.

It is no secret that over the past several years workforce has been a top concern of Ohio businesses as they struggle to fill vacancies. The Ohio Business Roundtable recognizes that an "all-of-the-above" approach must be taken to effectively make strides toward addressing this problem.



One such approach is strengthening our state's pathways to the workplace for sidelined populations—including individuals with criminal records.

As you know, HB 460 allows certain criminal records to be automatically sealed and establishes a process for identifying those individuals through the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCII). Additionally, it allows for prosecutors and BCII to object to certain records being sealed to preserve a certain level of public safety.

We know that the national unemployment rate is five times higher for the formerly incarcerated population versus the general population¹. We also know that this group of individuals is 50% less likely to get a second interview if they have a criminal record².

For those who clear their record, on average they see a 20% earnings increase over two years³—and we all know that a consistent paycheck is key factor to reduce recidivism and provide meaningful opportunities for an individual to remain on the right track.

In 2021, major employers and national organizations announced the launch of the Second Chance Business Coalition (SCBC), an initiative focused on improving and advancing hiring opportunities for people who have criminal records. Several OBRT member companies participate in this group, including JPMorgan Chase, which is a co-chair of the organization.

According to the SCBC, employers who have made fair chance hiring a part of their talent acquisition strategy have benefitted, saying that these employees have performed as well or better than an employee without a record.

These second-chance statistics go hand in hand with Ohio's current workforce gaps. As of May 1st on the Ohio Means Jobs website, there are 182,415 jobs openings posted with 106,724 jobs that pay more than \$50,000/year. Of those, there are 32,216 jobs that pay over \$50,000/year *and* don't require a college degree.

We appreciate the bill sponsors work with the business community to include language in the bill that provides immunity for employers to the extent that a sealed or expunged record is the basis of a claim against the employer for negligent hiring or negligent supervision. This is a crucial protection for employers to alleviate concerns surrounding the hiring of offenders.

1—Selbin, Jeffrey, Justin McCrary, and Joshua Epstein. "Unmarked: Criminal Record Clearing and Employment Outcomes, 108 J. Criminal Law & Criminology." (2018)

2—Stacy, Christina and Mychal Cohen. "Ban the Box and Racial Discrimination A Review of the Evidence and Policy Recommendations." Urban Institute.

3—Kopf, L. C. and D. (2018, July). *Out of prison & out of work. Out of Prison & Out of Work | Prison Policy Initiative.*

Ultimately, by providing greater workforce opportunities to the offender population, we can both strengthen the outcomes and reduce recidivism for the formerly incarcerated and close the workforce gaps many Ohio companies are struggling with. For that reason, the Ohio Business Roundtable urges your support of House Bill 460.

Thank you to the committee for your time and consideration of this legislation.