



**Senators George Lang and Nathan Manning
Sponsor Testimony - Senate Bill 198
House State and Local Government Committee
December 3rd, 2024**

Chairman Wiggam, Ranking Member Brennan thank you for allowing us the opportunity to come before you and provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 198, which seeks to enhance Ohio's workforce through meaningful re-entry preparation options for inmates.

When it comes to building a robust economy, workforce development is one of the key challenges to take on. In Ohio, many employers are still struggling to fill jobs and find the skilled labor necessary to perform them. Many people leaving prison check all the boxes for unfilled jobs, but they often face a difficult task: having the proper documentation for employment.

Upon release, if inmates don't have an ID or know their social security number, employers cannot process their hiring paperwork. In addition, for many of those leaving incarceration, finding out how to get to a service center for a photo ID or social security card can be an insurmountable task.

Senate Bill 198 seeks to remedy this by requiring the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and Ohio Department of Youth Services to provide an eligible inmate with

crucial and necessary identification documents to assist in obtaining employment once released from prison.

These documents include:

- A photo identification license or driver's license, if the person is eligible pursuant to existing state law;
- A certified copy of the birth certificate;
- A social security card or replacement social security card, if they have one;
- A copy of the vocational training record or work record of the inmate, if applicable;

Importantly, this legislation excludes any inmate who is not a citizen or lawful resident of the United States.

Data shows that obtaining employment within 30 days of release is the single most important factor in reducing recidivism. This legislation creates one less hurdle to employment in this state for people who are focused on becoming and remaining productive, law-abiding citizens. Providing individuals with these documents will undoubtedly address the challenge of workforce development for employers, while significantly reducing the likelihood of former inmates re-offending.

We would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 198. I am happy to answer any questions.