



Columbus
Urban League

Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on SB 198.

My name is Dion Evans and I am a ReEntry Hub graduate for the Columbus Urban League. I am a 42-year-old native of Columbus, Ohio, and my life embodies the power of transformation and hope. After serving 17 ½ years in prison for two felony-2 burglaries, I've emerged stronger, more determined, and fully committed to building a future that inspires and empowers others. Growing up, my sister and I were raised by our mother in Section 8 housing while facing the absence of my father. These early challenges shaped my perspective but never defined my destiny.

During my incarceration, I uncovered talents I had never imagined and committed myself to personal growth. I earned nearly 250 certificates, six professional certifications, and four licenses. I acted in 10 plays, participated in three documentaries, and joined eight choirs. I also authored my book, PTSD on Convicts, to shed light on the mental health struggles that incarcerate individuals face. Driven by a desire to make a difference, I became an advocate, helping secure the judicial release of 13 inmates, including myself, reducing my sentence by nearly two years.

Since my release on February 22, 2024, I have been focused on creating a new life built on purpose and service. I earned four additional certifications and launched a motivational speaking company to share my story and uplift others. Speaking at influential events, including the Ohio Statehouse, has been a highlight of my journey. There, I successfully advocated for the passage of Senate Bill 37. My recovery journey remains a priority—I attend three AA meetings weekly and actively participate in The LifeVineyard Church. Thanks to the Re-Entry HUB program, I was able to purchase an electric scooter, which has given me the independence and mobility to pursue my goals.

In April 2024, I joined the Re-Entry HUB Cohort and connected with Re-Entry Coach Reggie Battle. Through his guidance in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) classes, I developed vital skills to reintegrate into both the workforce and society. Under the leadership of Program Coordinator Brandon Williams, I earned my OSHA 10 and Forklift certifications. The Career Services Workshop, led by Jay Young, equipped me with essential skills in interviewing, resume writing, and digital literacy for job searching. These experiences strengthened my confidence and prepared me for success beyond the program.

By June 27, 2024, I had established my business with the support of the Columbus Urban League's Minority Business Assistance Center. My journey came full circle when I was honored to serve as the keynote speaker at the Re-Entry HUB Graduation. Standing before my peers, I shared my story of resilience and my unwavering commitment to giving back to the community.



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My life is proof that, with faith, resilience, and community support, it is possible to overcome even the most difficult challenges. I've transformed my own path, and now I dedicate myself to inspiring and empowering others to do the same.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony, please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.