



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

Safely Helping Formerly Incarcerated Ohioans Reintegrate into Society

Interested Party Testimony
Ohio Senate Community Revitalization Committee
Ohio House Bill 50

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As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Chair Landis, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify regarding **Ohio House Bill 50**.

My name is Greg R. Lawson, I am a research fellow at **The Buckeye Institute**, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

The Buckeye Institute supports smart **criminal justice reforms** that ensure that the punishment fits the crime while maximizing public safety using limited public resources. This often means encouraging policies that curb collateral sanctions on people who have served their time and are trying to reintegrate into society. Failing to help such people can unintentionally increase **recidivism and decrease employment opportunities**, risking harm to the public and those trying to rebuild their lives.

House Bill 50 ameliorates these risks by creating a certificate of qualification for housing, or CQH, that will help stabilize housing and mitigate **myriad adverse issues** that can make full re-entry into society difficult. A CQH shows prospective landlords or housing decisionmakers that the formerly incarcerated can be trusted with a lease or rental agreement and provides liability coverage for landlords that offer them.

To be clear, a CQH is not a free pass for bad actors. Public safety remains paramount, and CQH recipients must be thoroughly vetted. Courts can only grant CQHs after reviewing all relevant court filings and evidence regarding a petitioner’s criminal history and determining that a CQH will not pose an unreasonable safety risk. A CQH will be revoked if the recipient is subsequently convicted of any felony or violent misdemeanor. And CQH holders must still meet any relevant requirements of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Law.

House Bill 50’s CQH policy builds on Ohio’s already successful **certificates of qualification for employment (CQE)**, which offer similar benefits for recipients and protections for employers. Ohio **employers** have supported the CQE program and continue to raise awareness for it.

Policymakers are right to recognize that those formerly incarcerated have an uphill climb as they re-enter society, and government policies should make that climb easier, not harder, by helping released prisoners secure stable housing in addition to stable employment. Offering certificates of qualification for housing and employment while protecting public safety do just that.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have.

About The Buckeye Institute

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