



Senators George Lang and Nathan Manning
Sponsor Testimony - Senate Bill 198
Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee
December 12th, 2023

Vice Chair Wilkin, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee, 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. And in Ohio, a large number of 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 of the United States or a lawful resident of the United States who has legal authorization to work in the country, or who is otherwise ineligible for a photo identification license under Ohio law. Senate Bill 198 also does not create a new form of ID for those leaving incarceration, but rather requires the ODRC to provide a license or ID to those who are eligible according to the law.

Data shows that obtaining employment within 30 days of release is the single most important factor in reducing re-offenses. This legislation creates one less hurdle to employment in this state for people who are laser 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 reoffending.

By enacting the proposed changes in Senate Bill 198, we can continue to strengthen Ohio's workforce and fight to make Ohio the most business-friendly state in the union.

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