



February 27, 2024

Chairman George Lang

Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee

1 Capitol Square Columbus, Ohio 43215

**Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Wilkin, and members of the Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee,**

My name is Lauren Krisai, and I am the Deputy Director of the Justice Action Network, a national bipartisan organization that advocates for evidence based and data driven criminal justice policies at the state and federal levels. I'm here to testify in support of Senate Bill 198 and want to thank Chairman Lang and Senator Manning for their leadership on this important issue.

When a person is released from prison, data consistently shows that the most important factor in reducing recidivism is employment. The longer the person goes without obtaining employment after release—even if that amount of time is a few days—the more likely they are to recidivate and end up back in the justice system.

We have spoken to employers across the country—including in Ohio—who are struggling to fill jobs right now. Many people who serve their time in prison are ready to put it behind them by the time they get out. They're ready for that second chance, they're ready to work, and they're ready to provide for themselves and their families again.

If these motivated individuals don't have an ID or know what their social security number is, they have to navigate the bureaucratic process of getting one or both of those things and are therefore spending less time applying for jobs in the crucial days following release.

Senate Bill 198 streamlines that process by requiring the Ohio DRC, DYS, and the BMV to coordinate in providing these crucial documents to eligible individuals nearing the end of their incarceration so they're ready to apply for a job on day one. Or put simply: **Senate Bill 198 will enhance Ohio's workforce through meaningful re-entry preparation.**

This bill will benefit employers and those leaving incarceration alike. To us, this is what strong workforce development and criminal justice reform legislation is all about: establishing data-driven, commonsense policies that are proven to improve workforce opportunities, reduce recidivism, and create fewer crime victims in the future. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Krisai".

Lauren Krisai, Deputy Director

Justice Action Network