September 16, 2025

Re: Support for HB 296

Dear Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Synenberg, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a letter in support of House Bill 296. We are proud to support Ohio leaders advancing this and other improvements to our public safety systems.

The Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) is a multi-state organization that promotes effective approaches to public safety in states across the country. We support strategies that reduce costly reliance on incarceration, increase trauma recovery services, and prioritize safe communities. In one of our flagship programs, we bring together constituents for whom safety is the north star: TimeDone.

TimeDone supports people living with convictions. Many of our members have experienced reentry or are currently navigating reentry. Nationally, TimeDone represents more than 270,000 members—including 10,279 Ohio residents—who are directly impacted by the challenges this bill seeks to address.

HB 296 would strengthen reentry and workforce engagement by creating a six-month grace period before people exiting prisons are responsible for paying any owed criminal justice fines and fees. People returning home from prison face myriad challenges to achieve stability, which can include finding stable housing, getting a job, accessing medical care and treatment, and complying with community supervision requirements. Meeting these basic needs is essential to navigating the reentry process successfully and avoiding future involvement in the criminal justice system. Delaying fines and fees payment collection for six months gives people coming out of prison a chance to get back on their feet and rejoin the workforce so that they have the resources to support themselves and their families, and take responsibility for their court debts.

In closing, we urge you to pass HB 296 - a common-sense, bipartisan public safety bill. Please let us know if we can provide any more information. We thank you for your dedication and ongoing leadership on improving public safety in Ohio, and stand ready to support you in any way.

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