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Gary Click
State Representative

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Upchurch, Members of the Small Business Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today.

I am honored to co-sponsor HB 268, which proposes an amendment to Section 2953.25 of the Ohio Revised Code. This piece of legislation aims to enhance the effectiveness of the Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) program by changing the circumstances under which a person may file a petition to CQE. Currently, under Ohio Revised Code, those with a criminal background must adhere to specific waiting periods before an they can petition for a CQE. These waiting periods are designed to ensure that individuals are truly rehabilitated before re-entering the workforce.

However, I believe this wait period could do more harm than good. Say for instance you have been incarcerated for petty theft. When you are let out from prison, you are just as poor as you were before the crime. You now have a wait period before you can get a job to provide for yourself and your family. This is a case that many find themselves living.

The CQE serves as a lifeline for those with a criminal background. It will help these individuals overcome employment barriers that they face after incarceration.

HB 268 seeks to amend these provisions to allow for greater flexibility and access to the CQE process, ensuring that deserving individuals are not unduly delayed in their pursuit of employment after incarceration.

HB 268 aims to simplify the petition process, reducing administrative burdens and making it more accessible for individuals seeking a CQE.

It emphasizes the importance of rehabilitation and personal growth, ensuring that these factors are given weight in the decision-making process for CQE petitions. Other states have already put legislation like this into action.



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Arizona:

Enacted HB2067, allowing courts to issue a "certificate of second chance" to individuals who have had a judgment of guilt set aside. This certificate effectively releases the person from barriers in obtaining an occupational license.

Colorado:

Passed HB 1098, requiring the Department of Regulatory Agencies to audit regulated occupations to identify barriers for individuals with criminal histories. The law specifies procedures for denying professional licenses, certifications, or registrations, ensuring that denials are based on a direct relationship to the duties and responsibilities of the occupation, rather than just a criminal background.

Illinois:

Implemented the Health Care Worker Background Check Act which allows individuals with certain criminal records to petition the Illinois Department of Public Health for "rehabilitation" waivers, enabling them to work in healthcare settings.

By amending Section 2953.25, HB 268 will:

- Provide individuals with a fairer opportunity to obtain employment and contribute positively to society.
- Facilitating access to stable employment, which is a key factor in successful reintegration.
- Strengthen Ohio's workforce by tapping into a pool of qualified individuals who otherwise would have a delayed entrance into the workforce.

I respectfully urge the committee to consider the passage of House Bill 268. This legislation represents a step forward in supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals with a criminal background. I believe this aligns with Ohio's commitment to justice, fairness, and economic vitality, and will continue to make us the heart of it all.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.