

Am. Sub. H. B. No. 96
As Passed by the House

_____ moved to amend as follows:

In the table on line 138285, in row J, delete "\$135,000,000" and insert "\$135,150,000 \$135,175,000" 1
2
In the table on line 138285, in rows N and AI, add \$150,000 to 3
fiscal year 2026 and \$175,000 in fiscal year 2027 4
After line 138353, insert: 5
"UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT REINTEGRATION SERVICES AND EMPOWERMENT 6
PROGRAM 7
Of the foregoing appropriation item 503321, Parole and Community 8
Operations, \$150,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$175,000 in fiscal year 2027 9
shall be distributed to University Settlement to support its Reintegration 10
Services and Empowerment Program." 11

The motion was _____ agreed to.

SYNOPSIS 12

Department of Rehabilitation and Correction 13

Legislative Service Commission



Sections 383.10 and 383.20	14
Increases GRF ALI 503321, Parole and Community Operations,	15
by \$150,000 in FY 2026 and \$175,000 in FY 2027 and earmarks	16
these funds to be distributed to University Settlement to	17
support its Reintegration Services and Empowerment Program.	18

TESTIMONY OF RICHAUN N. BUNTON, LSW, MSN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT, CLEVELAND, OHIO IN SUPPORT OF SUB H.B. 96 W/ AMENDMENT SCO520

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chairman Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Richaun Bunton, and I serve as the Executive Director of University Settlement, a 100-year-old nonprofit organization deeply rooted in the Slavic Village neighborhood of Cleveland.

I'm here today to speak in support of Amendment SCO520 and specifically about the importance of our Re-Entry program, an initiative that responds to one of the most urgent needs in our community: helping individuals returning from incarceration successfully reintegrate into society and rebuild their lives.

Unlike many traditional service models, our Re-Entry work doesn't begin and end with referrals or paperwork. We meet people where they are—with dignity, consistency, and hands-on support. We provide wraparound services that include workforce coaching, mental health access, peer mentoring, and most critically, a human connection to a community that believes in their second chance. Our staff includes individuals who have lived experience with navigating complicated life challenges and strong partnerships with individuals and organizations with lived experience and high-quality re-entry expertise, making a tremendous difference. We are not just offering services but building relationships that restore trust and belonging.

Slavic Village is a neighborhood that has a disproportionate amount of ex-offenders returning to it annually. When returning citizens are left without support, there are costs—families are destabilized, recidivism rises, and neighborhoods suffer. But the ripple effect is transformative when they are welcomed with structure, purpose, and real opportunity. That is what University Settlement provides, we have effective programs that keep the community safer and lead to productive lives for those returning from prison.

We respectfully ask that a portion of the funds already allocated to the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections be directed to support nonprofit organizations like ours—organizations doing the daily, on-the-ground work of Re-Entry. While much of this funding often goes to government agencies, we believe nonprofit entities like University Settlement offer a community-centered model that produces tangible outcomes, not just outputs. Our request for these services is a tiny portion of funds already allocated for this purpose. We can do more with less and bring about the desired impact.

Many philanthropic and private sector partners proudly support University Settlement, like The Cleveland Foundation, The Highley Foundation, Fowler Family Foundation, Thomas White, and more. While over 80% of our support comes from private sources, we ask the State to help close the gap on government-prioritized work like Re-Entry. This is not about

creating new spending, but instead about strategically directing existing funds to where they are most effective.

We are ready to do more, and with the State's partnership, we can do more. We urge you to consider a directed fund within the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections that would allow nonprofits like University Settlement to expand and deepen this work the way Amendment SCO520 provides.

Thank you for your time, service, and commitment to justice that restores, not just punishes. I am pleased to answer any questions that you may have and thank you so much for your consideration of this request that will help keep Ohio safer and more productive.