



Senator Steve Huffman
5th District
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
February 26, 2025
Senate Bill 8

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and fellow members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee, I am grateful to provide sponsor testimony today on Senate Bill 8.

Senate Bill 8 moves to prohibit a public employer from providing paid leave or compensation for a public employee to engage in certain union activities. This legislation will move to prevent the practice of public entities hiring individuals under the practice of “release time”.

Release time is a practice in which public employees are relieved from the job that they were originally employed in order to work full-time for a union at the expense of taxpayers.

According to the Goldwater Institute, the City of Columbus paid more than \$1.1 million and 38,469 hours to individuals from June of 2019 to June of 2020 as a result of release time. Additionally, during the same time period, the Department of Corrections paid roughly \$596,904 and 22,681 hours due to this practice¹².

In July of last year, the Arizona Supreme Court unanimously (7-0) struck down release time as unconstitutional. The Arizona Supreme Court believed that release time violates the gift clause in Arizona’s state constitution and expressed skepticism that it even serves any beneficial public purpose at all. This ruling ensures that taxpayer dollars will be spent to advance public interests, not private special interests, specifically the politically

¹ https://www.thecentersquare.com/ohio/report-city-of-columbus-pays-millions-for-non-city-release-time-work/article_a5557a6a-147e-11eb-abd5-27dee3bdc4ad.html

² <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/tracking-release-time-2/>

powerful interests of government labor unions³. Although Ohio's Constitution does not have language identical to Arizona's Gift Clause, it does prohibit the use of public funds to aid private enterprise⁴.

It is my belief that taxpayers in the state of Ohio should have their tax dollars distributed to public employees in order to benefit the public good and not to benefit a private entity. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to you today, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

³ <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/az-supreme-court-strikes-down-union-release-time-on-taxpayers-dime/>.

⁴ Ohio Constitution Article VIII, Sections 4 and 6.