



**Ohio Senate Workforce Development Committee  
Senate Bill 143  
Criminal Background Employment Application Question  
Matt Habash, President/CEO Mid-Ohio Food Collective  
February 10, 2026**

Chair Koehler, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Minority Member Ingram and members of the Workforce Development Committee, I am Matt Habash, President and CEO of Mid-Ohio Food Collective. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony as an interested party to Senate Bill 143, regarding employment application questions referencing criminal background.

Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC) is the largest food relief agency in central and eastern Ohio, serving 20 urban, rural and Appalachian counties from Chillicothe to Marion and Marysville to Steubenville, including Columbus. Last year Mid-Ohio Food Collective distributed more than 80 million pounds of food – enough for more than 180,000 meals every day, serving over 500,000 children, seniors, veterans, disabled and working adults facing nutritional insecurity. If you would like to learn more about our services in each of our 20 counties, individual county breakdowns are available at <https://mofc.org/who-we-are/#county-impact>. Likewise, please reach out to MOFC staff if you are interested in learning more about our operations; contact information for our advocacy team is included at the end of this testimony.

As part of our efforts to feed the line today to end hunger tomorrow, we have a benefits outreach team that works with customers on assistance programs, including with special populations such as individuals being released from incarceration. Too often, individuals are released with minimal support to reintegrate into the community, putting additional strain on these individuals, family and friends, and the community. A criminal background should not condemn a person to a lifetime of hunger or economic insecurity.

Our benefits outreach team was part of an effort to obtain a waiver to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to allow individuals to receive SNAP benefits upon release. This waiver sought to ensure these individuals have access to needed food as obtaining employment often takes longer for someone who has been incarcerated. If there are other needs, such as health coverage, our team also tries to assist with those. While our team does not provide direct job support for those being released, they work to ensure there is needed support and guidance to help with re-entry to society.

Mid-Ohio Food Collective, as a mission-driven organization, is a “second chance employer,” willing to hire those with a criminal conviction if the conviction is not relevant to the position. For instance, financial crimes would disqualify someone from an accounting position; however, if there is not conflict with the conviction and employment position and the person meets other job requirements, we are willing to hire the individual. Functioning as a “second chance employer” addresses one of the often-unspoken barriers for formerly incarcerated individuals – the stigma of a criminal record. We encourage all to move beyond such stigmatization and offer employment opportunities, providing a route to self-sustainment.

We are also aware that many facilities offer training programs and education. Coordination is needed to match released individuals with businesses willing to utilize learned skills. Job development programs are imperative to provide necessary skill sets, but let’s also ensure the opportunity to utilize learned skills.

Employment questionnaires are just part of the equation in successfully reintegrating individuals into the community. We urge ongoing focus on what steps can be taken to ensure those with a criminal record are given the fullest opportunity to become productive members of the community.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we commend Senators Craig and Blessing for the introduction of this bill as well as those working to improve the bill's language. We urge the committee and interested parties to continue working toward solutions to best assist those re-entering society to have true opportunities to do so successfully. Mid-Ohio Food Collective remains committed to serving *all* in our communities and encourages continuing dialogue on how to do so best.

One of my mentors often commented that no social program can replace a good paying job. I believe that remains as true now as when I first heard this years ago. Let's work together to ensure those able to work can do so, in positions that provide for them and their loved ones. Thank you for your time and consideration of our input and please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Matt Habash  
President/CEO  
Mid-Ohio Food Collective  
mhabash@mofc.org  
(614) 277-3663

**Mid-Ohio Food Collective Advocacy Contacts**

Tim White: Director, Government Relations and Advocacy  
(C) (614) 314-2485  
Twhite@mofc.org

Hallie Carrino-Lee: Manager, Government Relations and Advocacy  
(C) (631) 338-5000  
Hcarrino-lee@mofc.org

Mike Hochron: Senior Vice President, Communications and Public Affairs  
(P) 614-317-9446  
Mhochron@mofc.org