



February, 9, 2026

Chairman Koehler, Vice Chairwoman Reynolds, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Ohio Senate Workforce Development Committee, my name is Maria Foschia, and I serve as the President & CEO of Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM). I write to express our firm support for the bipartisan Senate Bill 143, also known as private sector “Ban the Box” legislation.

Inspired by our Lutheran faith tradition and a commitment to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly (Micah 6:8), LMM’s mission to challenge injustices faced by those who are oppressed, forgotten, and hurting by providing responsive solutions, voice and hope.

We provide workforce programs and advocate for legislation that promotes workforce skills for those who are currently incarcerated, as well as support legislation that helps people upon their release. As an example of one of our programs, Chopping 4 Change (C4C) is highly successful and works with women currently incarcerated at the Northeast Reintegration Center (NERC). C4C provides culinary skills and training that enrollees can use to enhance their job readiness and earn certification upon their release. C4C has achieved great success, serving 438 students since program inception, with graduation rates averaging near 80%, and job retention at 80% after 6 months of employment. **Most significantly, over 8 years of operation, recidivism rates for participants enrolled in the program after reentry have consistently been below 3%.** This is compared to the state average of 18% for women.

But just as important as helping people who are currently incarcerated, it is also imperative that we reduce barriers to workplace opportunities for those who have been justice-impacted. These barriers can create hurdles to employment that not only harm individuals in their quest to gain employment but also impact our workforce. We support “Ban the Box” legislation because, by banning the box on the initial job application, it means that otherwise-worthy job candidates are not set aside solely because they are justice-impacted. This is especially important in the age of automated job screening and application processes. We also underscore one of the statements by the bill sponsors, that Senate Bill 143 “does not prevent employers from conducting background checks, nor does it remove their right to make employment decisions based on legitimate concerns about safety, trust, or suitability for the job.”

As a second chance employer, more than one-third of LMM's staff have experienced the criminal legal system. We believe that everyone deserves a second chance. However, second chances don’t occur by accident; they require interventions that tackle the real barriers individuals encounter when reentering society.

What this legislation underscores is that a person is more than their criminal conviction. By passing this legislation, we step forward in reducing the stigma associated with a criminal background who have paid their debt to society, reducing discrimination against justice-impacted individuals, and promoting opportunities that can provide them with the best chance of starting a new chapter in their life and career journey – one that leads to a stronger Ohio economy.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Foschia
President & CEO

