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To: Senate Workforce Development Committee
Fr: Michaela Burriss, Policy Director
Re: Senate Bill 143 Proponent Testimony
Date: Tuesday, February 10, 2026

Good morning, Chair Koehler, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Workforce Development Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of the Ohio Justice & Policy Center in support of Substitute Senate Bill (Sub SB) 143, legislation seeking to prohibit employers from inquiring about or considering the criminal background of an applicant on any initial employment application.

OJPC has previously provided proponent testimony in support of SB 143. Our attorneys within our **Second Chance** project routinely see the impact of a criminal record on one's ability to find stable housing and employment post-conviction. "Banning the box" in the private sector strengthens Ohio's economy by addressing the collateral sanctions that account for billions of dollars in lost wages that generate wealth for households, taxable income for governments, and help businesses thrive.

OJPC remains supportive of this legislation following the changes made in Sub SB 143. These changes do not impact what we see as a major barrier to those with criminal records entering the workforce: being discouraged to apply for fear they will be immediately excluded when the "box" is on the application. Sub SB 143 clarifies and maintains the requirement that the question cannot be posed in the initial application process. These changes make it clear to employers at what stage of an application process a question about a criminal background check can be asked.

OJPC would have liked to see the bill maintain the requirement that employers conduct an individualized assessment of whether the criminal background has a direct and adverse relationship with the specific duties of the job that justify denying the applicant the position. We know stigma impacts someone's second chance and we believe that this assessment would lead employers to discover that many criminal records have little bearing on one's ability to perform a job.



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Nonetheless, OJPC still believes Sub SB 143 as currently written will allow employers to reap the benefits of larger talent pools, higher engagement rates, and reduced turnover even if those impacts could be greater with the original bill language.

Sub SB 143 will still get more people into our workforce, increase revenues and public safety while decreasing the cost of our justice system overall. Sub SB 143 is smart justice and good for Ohio businesses.

Chair Koehler, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Workforce Development Committee, thank you again for allowing me to present the Ohio Justice & Policy Center's support for Sub SB 143. I would be glad to answer any questions.