

88th House District
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Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Ingram, Members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today.

I am honored to co-sponsor HB 268, which proposes an amendment to Section 2953.25 of the Ohio Revised Code. This piece of legislation aims to enhance the effectiveness of the Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) program by changing the circumstances under which a person may file a petition to CQE.

Under current law, an individual must wait until one year after their sanctions are complete. Some individuals may be under community control for up to five years. This means that this individual may have to wait six years before even applying. It is worth noting that applying for a CQE does not imply receiving one. An applicant must submit evidence to the judge that they have been rehabilitated and are worthy of this recognition.

House Bill 268 reduces the time period that an individual must wait before applying to one year after release. If there is not sufficient evidence of rehabilitation, the judge can deny the certificate. However, if an individual has taken their rehabilitation seriously, they may be able to demonstrate so and improve their quality of life.

If we want to move people from dependency to being contributors to society and reduce the risk of recidivism, we must give them the opportunity and means to do so in a timely manner. HB 268 does that.

HB 268 passed unanimously out of the House Small Business Committee as well as the House floor. Representative Humphrey and I are hopeful that this legislation will receive the same strong bipartisan support in the Senate that it has from the House and land on the Governor's desk soon. We would appreciate the full support of this committee, and we are ready to entertain your questions at this time.

Additional Notes:

Arizona: Enacted HB2067, allowing courts to issue a "certificate of second chance" to individuals who have had a judgment of guilt set aside. This certificate effectively releases the person from barriers in obtaining an occupational license.

Colorado:

Passed HB 1098, requiring the Department of Regulatory Agencies to audit regulated occupations to identify barriers for individuals with criminal histories. The law specifies procedures for denying professional licenses, certifications, or registrations, ensuring that denials are based on a direct relationship to the duties and responsibilities of the occupation, rather than just a criminal background.

Illinois:

Implemented the Health Care Worker Background Check Act, which allows individuals with certain criminal records to petition the Illinois Department of Public Health for "rehabilitation" waivers, enabling them to work in healthcare settings.

By amending Section 2953.25, HB 268 will:

- Provide individuals with a fairer opportunity to obtain employment and contribute positively to society.
- Facilitating access to stable employment, which is a key factor in successful reintegration.
- Strengthening Ohio's workforce by tapping into a pool of qualified individuals who otherwise would have delayed entrance into the workforce.

I respectfully urge the committee to consider the passage of House Bill 268. This legislation represents a step forward in supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals with a criminal background. I believe this aligns with Ohio's commitment to justice, fairness, and economic vitality and will continue to make us the heart of it all.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

