

2nd House District

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Good Morning Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 268.

House Bill 268 passed the House in October with unanimous support, reflecting strong bipartisan agreement that this legislation is a practical and responsible step forward in strengthening Ohio's workforce and supporting successful reentry.

House Bill 268 proposes a modest but meaningful change to Ohio law concerning the Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE), aligning it with the recently enacted Certificate of Qualification for Housing (CQH)-legislation I was proud to champion alongside the Honorable Representative Bill Seitz in the last General Assembly.

Let me begin with a brief explanation of the CQE. The Certificate of Qualification for Employment is available to individuals with prior convictions who submit a formal application. CQEs provide relief from mandatory legal restrictions that would otherwise automatically bar individuals from certain jobs or occupational licenses due to their criminal record. As part of the application, individuals must articulate how the certificate would benefit them and their rehabilitation. If approved, the CQE can be

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presented to potential employers, who are then required to assess the applicant fairly.

Importantly, if an employer chooses to hire the individual, they are protected from tort liability under a claim of negligent hiring.

Under current law, individuals convicted of a felony must complete up to five years of Community Control Sanctions and then wait an additional year before becoming eligible to apply for a Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE).

House Bill 268 proposes to amend this timeline by allowing individuals convicted of felonies to apply for a CQE one year after their release from incarceration, rather than one year after completing Community Control Sanctions, which can last approximately 2 to 5 years.

The current law for misdemeanor offenses remains unchanged: individuals may apply for a CQE six months after completing Community Control and any other sanctions.

This adjustment is important. It helps individuals reenter the workforce sooner and supports more timely reintegration into society. It also brings consistency to the CQE and CQH processes. Consider a situation in which someone is granted a CQH and secures stable housing but must wait years before applying for a CQE to access

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employment-that inconsistency undermines the broader goals of reintegration and self-sufficiency.

To be clear: House Bill 268 does not change the CQE application process, the list of disqualifying offenses, or the requirement for judicial review and issuance. The only change proposed is to the waiting period before an individual who has committed a felony becomes eligible to apply.

I would like to thank my joint sponsor, Representative Click, for his partnership on this important legislation. I welcome any questions from the committee.