As Introduced

136th General Assembly
Regular Session **H. R. No. 507**
2025-2026

Representatives Mathews, A., Johnson

A R E S O L U T I O N

To affirm the importance of religious liberty protections for incarcerated individuals under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 and recognize the contributions of Prison Fellowship.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

WHEREAS, The First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion, and those protections do not end at the prison gate; and

WHEREAS, The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act ensures that individuals in prisons, jails, and other institutions receiving federal funds are not subjected to unjustified burdens on their religious freedoms; and

WHEREAS, The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, now in its 25th year, affirms the fundamental right of individuals who are incarcerated to freely exercise their faith while in custody; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Supreme Court has consistently upheld the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act's constitutionality and importance in cases including *Cutter v. Wilkinson* (2005), *Holt v. Hobbs* (2015), *Dunn v. Smith* (2021),

and *Ramirez v. Collier* (2022), reaffirming that religious liberty protections extend to incarcerated persons; and

WHEREAS, Practicing one's faith in correctional settings fosters personal accountability, improved mental health, and successful reentry into society and in turn promotes safer prisons and reduces recidivism; and

WHEREAS, Faith practice can provide prisoners with a sense of purpose, meaning, dignity, and community, and can promote compassion, empathy, peace, and reconciliation; and

WHEREAS, Prison Fellowship, founded in 1976 by the late Charles Colson following his personal conversion and strengthened faith during incarceration, has championed the religious liberty of incarcerated individuals and actively supported the adoption and defense of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act; and

WHEREAS, Prison Fellowship is the nation's largest Christian nonprofit organization that serves prisoners, former prisoners, and their families, and annually reaches more than 600,000 individuals receiving support from more than 200,000 volunteers nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Prison Fellowship currently has robust programming in nine prisons in Ohio and evaluations of Prison Fellowship's academy program by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Baylor University, and the Minnesota Department of Corrections have shown significant reductions in recidivism over sixty percent for program participants demonstrating the power of faith-informed programming and its ability to transform lives; and

WHEREAS, Prison Fellowship will mark its 50th anniversary in 2026, continuing its mission to seek justice, love mercy, and restore hope for men and women behind bars, and to ensure robust

opportunities for religious practice within prisons; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Ohio House of Representatives affirms its strong support for the protections for incarcerated individuals guaranteed under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Ohio House of Representatives honors Prison Fellowship on the occasion of its upcoming 50th anniversary and commends its decades of service in advancing restoration, rehabilitation, and second chances through faith-based programs; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Ohio House of Representatives encourages correctional agencies within Ohio to adopt policies and practices consistent with both the letter and spirit of protections for incarcerated individuals in the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, ensuring that faith-based and volunteer-led programs remain accessible to those who seek them; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the House of Representatives transmit duly authenticated copies of this resolution to the members of the Ohio Congressional delegation and the news media of Ohio.