



HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE – Proponent Testimony, SB 288,
December 8th, 2022

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity and invitation to provide testimony.

My name is Jeff Dillon, and I am the Ohio Legislative Director for Americans for Prosperity (AFP). As one of the largest grassroots organizations in the country, AFP is driving long-term solutions to some of the country's biggest problems. Our organization, and its activists across Ohio, are dedicated to breaking barriers that stand in the way of people realizing their full potential. That is why we support SB 288; a smart, measured set of reforms to Ohio's criminal justice system that prioritize personal responsibility, public safety, and workforce development.

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) is named as such for a reason: its goal is or ought to be seeing most of those entering its doors eventually leaving with a better chance of becoming productive members of society. DRC and the Ohio General Assembly should be commended for previous reforms to the Ohio criminal justice system that have reduced unnecessary barriers to successful reentry and expanded evidence-based practices.

However, there is still more work to do. While Ohio leads in many areas when it comes to smart, data driven approaches to criminal justice, our state can still improve in many areas, many of which SB 288 contemplates. For example, compared to other states, Ohio has one of the lowest percentages an incarcerated individual can potentially earn off their prison sentence in the country, currently at eight percent of their total carceral sentence. SB 288 increases this cap to fifteen percent. While this is much lower than states such as Indiana, Kentucky, South Carolina, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, it is a step in the right direction to incentivize greater

participation in recidivism-reducing programming and treatment, while safely reducing the prison population to focus resources on higher-risk individuals.

SB 288 also expands and improves current judicial release mechanisms that allow for the release of individuals who committed certain lower-level offenses that DRC has determined can be safely monitored in the community after serving certain periods of time incarcerated. This will allow costly prison bed space to be used more effectively on high-risk inmates, while further incentivizing good behavior and program participation for worthy incarcerated individuals.

SB 288 also removes unnecessary roadblocks to someone turning their life around after going through the criminal justice system. A criminal record carries thousands of collateral consequences, many of which are necessary for the good of public safety, particularly for violent and sexual offenses. However, many unnecessarily limit a person's job prospects and opportunities for reentry. SB 288 will safely reduce some of these barriers by streamlining and making more affordable the process for earning a record seal for certain lower-level offenses and Certificates of Qualification for Employment. SB 288 also places a two-year moratorium on licensing sanctions that takes effect during that timeframe to help ensure the government isn't creating undue burdens on a person's vocational opportunities.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to offer testimony today. AFP would also like to publicly thank Senate President Huffman and Senator Manning for prioritizing this criminal justice reform legislation, as well as Representatives Seitz and Galonski for their sponsorship of and work on the companion bill, HB 699.

Please get SB 288 to the House Floor for a vote before time runs out in the 134th General Assembly. I'm happy to do my best to answer any questions that the committee may have.

Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit www.AmericansForProsperity.org.