



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

Removing Unnecessary Barriers to Work Can Make Our Communities Safer

Interested Party Testimony
Ohio Senate Workforce Development Committee
Ohio House Bill 268

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Chair Koehler, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding **Ohio House Bill 268**.

My name is Alex M. Certo, and I am a senior associate legal fellow at **The Buckeye Institute**, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

Criminal justice policy has a broad reach, affecting public safety, fiscal responsibility, and economic growth. For more than a decade, the General Assembly has shown its commitment to prudent, commonsense criminal justice policies by passing the **Certificate of Qualification for Housing** program; the nation’s first and best **mens rea** reform; **civil asset forfeiture reforms**; the **Targeted Community Alternatives to Prison** program; an expansion of **intervention-in-lieu-of-conviction eligibility**; and Ohio’s **Certificate of Qualification for Employment** (CQE) program.

Ohio exemplifies its laudable interest in justice and public safety by making it easier for those who have paid their debts to society to find employment, housing, and education. And House Bill 268 takes another modest but meaningful step in the right direction by allowing formerly incarcerated felons to obtain certificates of qualification for employment one year after release from incarceration, rather than making them wait until all their post-release supervision expires.

Academic studies show that **post-release employment** most accurately predicts recidivism, which means that job-related pre- and post-release policies directly affect public safety. By letting released felons obtain CQEs sooner, House Bill 268 will reduce the likelihood of recidivism by promoting stable employment—a point the General Assembly recognized when it created the **now-successful** CQE program.

A CQE reassures prospective employers and mitigates their risk by providing liability coverage for every CQE-holder they hire. But a CQE is not a blank check for bad actors. Courts grant CQE petitions only after reviewing relevant evidence and determining that the applicant does not pose an unreasonable risk to the public or any individual. And although CQEs remove automatic bars to employment, petitioners must still be qualified for employment or occupational licensing. Thus, CQE recipients will be thoroughly vetted before being hired.

Helping those with a criminal history is not always easy. But House Bill 268 can help make it easier by removing unnecessary government barriers that only make it harder for the formerly incarcerated to get their lives and careers back on track.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have.

About The Buckeye Institute

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