



**Center for
Employment
Opportunities**

April 26, 2022

The Honorable House Transportation Committee Chair, Scott VanSingel (HD-100)
Anderson House Office Building
S-1289 House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48933
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Memorandum of Support for House Bills 5380, 5381, 5382, 5383

Dear Chair VanSingel,

The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) expresses full support for House Bills 5380, 5381, 5382, and 5383 (HB 5380-83). These bills will enable the 9,000 individuals who return home from Michigan's correctional facilities annually, to obtain the necessary vital documents required to successfully reenter society and rebuild their lives.

CEO is the largest nonprofit reentry employment provider in the United States – we provide immediate comprehensive employment services to individuals on parole and probation, focusing outreach on those at highest risk of recidivism. Our operations in Michigan began in 2018, since then we have served over 300 individuals. We also operate as a third party provider under Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation's (DESC) Food Assistance Employment and Training (FAE&T) Plus Program and receive federal funding to provide direct services to FAP recipients. Critically, less than 8% of CEO's program participants have recidivated since launch - significantly lower than the national average.

As a transitional job provider that employs and places returning citizens in Michigan, we regularly encounter individuals in our programs who have returned home eager and ready to work, but who lack the necessary identification and/or means to afford its acquisition. Under current law, the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) is required to issue Prisoner ID cards upon release¹, but the process of attaining a state identification card or drivers' license is insufficient to grant necessary relief to these individuals – in part, because the DOC Prisoner ID cards only count as a secondary document to establish residency.²

Though virtually every DOC in the state is engaged in something that could be termed “discharge” or “release” planning, the depth and breadth of such plans vary widely. Barriers to vital documents such as social security cards prohibit individuals from being able to move forward with their lives, delay repayments of court-ordered fines and fees and victim

¹ http://reentry.molp.org/reentry/images/7/70/MOU_State_%26_MDOC-1.pdf

² This MOU explains that DOS offices should accept DOC-issued prisoner ID as one form of ID when obtaining state ID or a driver's license Department of State will accept, as proof of residency, a Department of Corrections' parole certificate/order for up to 30 days from the release date on the certificate/order.



restitution, and decrease the probability of successful reentry. Without a social security card in particular, there is no way for reentry employment providers such as ourselves to make someone I-9 compliant, even if they are able to obtain state identification.

It is also concerning that Michigan's general parole conditions require employment and debt repayment without regard to one's ability to access state identification³. We hope that the state legislature will take this into account.

Over the past several years, a variety of agency-led programs were deployed to improve the reentry process – such as mobile units in 2017 – however, none have adequately connected individuals with the appropriate services and tools to re enter their communities. Michigan's ability to hire, empower, train and sustain a strong workforce is negatively impacted by inconsistent application of reentry procedures. House Bills 5380-83 will help to establish a clear and uniform vital document procedure for all eligible Michiganders prior to their release so we can more readily increase the number of individuals who return home ready to immediately contribute to their communities.

Other states such as Illinois⁴, Indiana, Mississippi⁵, Louisiana⁶, Kentucky⁷, have remedied gaps in reentry planning by mandating at least one form of identification is issued to all individuals prior to release. Many returning individuals have spent as much as 25 weeks navigating various agencies to attain state identification because Michigan requires at least one document showing proof of identity and two documents to prove Michigan residency. We are grateful for the time and effort that Representative Aiyash (HD- 4) exercised to codify solid, evidence-based reentry policies as written in HB5380-83. We believe the passage of this bill package will help to actualize successful rehabilitation - empowering individuals, their families, and our state economy as a whole.

Respectfully,

Simone Price, Director of Organizing
Leah Bacon, Senior Policy Associate

Questions may be directed to sprice@ceoworks.org and lebacon@ceoworks.org.

³ https://www.michigan.gov/corrections/0,45517-119-1435_1474---00.html#:~:text=There%20are%20general%20conditions%20of,to%20reside%20at%20an%20approved

⁴ <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=099-0907>

⁵ <http://www.mdoc.ms.gov/About/Documents/House-Bill-585.pdf>

⁶ <http://doc.louisiana.gov/reentry-overview>

⁷ <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/15RS/HB428/bill.pdf>