“It will benefit thousands of rehabilitated citizens who have paid their dues to society and want to move on with their lives. This legislation eliminates barriers to employment and it reminds society that ex-offenders have a place among us.

Columbus– Yesterday, legislation introduced by State Senators Shirley Smith (D-Cleveland) and Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) was signed by Ohio Governor John Kasich. Senate Bill 337 is an extensive reform of the collateral sanctions that impose employment restrictions and limitations on over 2 million Ohioans with misdemeanor and felony convictions.

This legislation addresses a number of issues that have prevented ex-offenders from gaining successful reentry into society and their communities. It expandsOhio’s records sealing laws by allowing the sealing of one felony and one misdemeanor conviction, or two misdemeanor convictions.

The legislation also creates of a Certificate of Qualification for Employment that lifts automatic disqualification for certain state-issued occupational licenses and protects employers from negligent hiring lawsuits.

Senate Bill 337 also modifiesOhio's Child Support laws by giving courts more discretion in calculating child support obligations of incarcerated parents and parents with a felony conviction. The legislation also allows courts to work with individuals who would otherwise have their drivers' licenses suspended and it allows the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles to create a repayment plan for license reinstatement fees.

"I have long advocated for expandingOhio's record sealing laws, and for giving ex-offenders a second chance when finding employment. Senate Bill 337 accomplishes these goals and creates a dimension of redemption inOhioto complement our justice system," Smith said following the bill's signing.

"It will benefit thousands of rehabilitated citizens who have paid their dues to society and want to move on with their lives. This legislation eliminates barriers to employment and it reminds society that ex-offenders have a place among us.

"I have no doubt that people across the state will come to realize that ex-offenders want financial stability, employment, opportunity, a secure home, and the ability to support their loved ones. This legislation is another step in the right direction, and I hope that Ohio's business leaders and policymakers can continue this momentum."