

Good afternoon, Chair Leon and other house members. My name is Curtis. I am a PSU graduate student, a clinical coordinator at a local drug treatment facility here in Ashland, a present father and husband, and I am thriving among community members, inclusive of hope and compassion for healing. There is a critical question shared in the treatment field that all of us here should be mindful of, "Do you know me, or do you know my file?" If you knew my file, you'd know I was convicted of a non-violent felony in Oklahoma, 18 years old, and received a 5-year sentence. If you knew me, you'd know my interrogation by police led to a plea I should have never taken. You'd know, at age 18, I was an adequate high school student with good grades before ending up in a maximum prison standing next to a lifer, teaching me important lessons about survival. Where was my second chance then? An Oregon State police report will tell you precisely what my file says. I know because I have to submit one for almost anything educationally and professionally. I become faced with explaining why I am worthy of the opportunity, even when my educational file demonstrates more honors than I have felonies. Regarding SB 234, I will say that the best thing that came out of prison was getting my GED. Educational opportunities in prison are vital for reducing recidivism by helping people foster skillsets and purpose before integrating back into society. Having my GED allowed me to access higher ed when I reached a point in my life I could get clean and embrace growth. SB 713 understands that stigma influences behavior and poor community adjustment because it affects how people think and feel about themselves. The structural barriers affecting criminal offenders' integration in the community come down to one thing—their file. Please support second chance opportunities by eliminating the requirement for people to disclose criminal history during college admittance and allow them not to be defined by their file but by their aspirations to grow.