EARNED CREDIT IN OHIO

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What is Earned Credit?

Earned Credit is defined as a credit against a sentence or period of incarceration that is earned through participation in or completion of productive activities.

Key Takeaways

- Ohio has one of the lowest rates of Earned Credit in the nation at **8%**.
- Access to Earned Credit is limited, and there are differences in access across prisons.
- The average percentage of the total prison population earning credit from January to June 2022 was **19.38%.**

Methodology

We researched Ohio's Earned Credit program by:
- Interviewing individuals with lived experience in Ohio
- Interviewing practitioners who advocate for earned credit expansion
- Analyzing data received from the ODRC
- Attending meetings where Senate Bill 288 was discussed

Earned Credit: By the Numbers

Our analysis included all 28 Ohio prisons from January to June 2022. **The average percentage of the total prison population earning credit from January to June 2022 was 19.38% of the prison population—or 8,175 people.**

- The lowest one-time rate was 1.49% (25 people) at the Grafton Correctional Institution in February.
- The highest one-time rate was 54.48% (231 people) at the Northeast Reintegration Center in June.

Interview Insights

To gain more context regarding the difficulty in accessing Earned Credit-eligible programming, we interviewed lawmakers, criminal legal system reform advocates, people with lived experience, prison officials, reentry professionals and more. We found:

- Increased accessibility to Earned Credit through programming has bipartisan support.
- Participation in Earned Credit eligible programming increases prison safety, public safety, and lowers recidivism rates.
- People in prison overwhelmingly want more programs access to more programs.
- ODRC has many great initiatives and partnerships.
- Staffing and capacity appear to be a significant barrier to accessibility to Earned Credit-eligible programming.

Recommendations

Everyone has a role to play in expanding the breadth and availability of Ohio's Earned Credit program:

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Corrections

- Expand availability of Earned Credit eligible programs across all ODRC institutions
- Request funding to make this expansion possible via the State Budget process

Ohio General Assembly:

- Limit offenses that render a person ineligible for Earn Credit programs
- Pass Senate Bill 288 and continue to reassess and further expand the percentage of time that can be reduced through earned credit
- Support increased funding to ODRC specifically for Earned Credit programming
- Introduce and pass legislation to provide Earned Credit to people in jails, in addition to prisons

Employers:

- Find ways to be involved with returning citizen networks
- Hire returning citizens, especially those with earned credit program experience

Higher Education Institutions:

- Partner with ODRC institutions to create more educational program opportunities like that of Sinclair Community College at the Dayton Correctional Institution

Leadership Ohio Alumni / Everyday Ohioans

- Volunteer to serve for a locally accredited program at an ODRC institution
- Vote for politicians who support expansion of Earned Credit and re-entry reform

Organizations and advocates interested in continuing this research

- Continually request ODRC records to track access to and use of Earned Credit programs
- Create an asset map of nonprofits and higher education institutions which have programs eligible for credit at ODRC institutions
- Explore multigenerational resources for impacted families/communities