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

Disclaimer: These materials were created by Rachel Gagnon, Rayshun Holt, Jocelyn Rosnick, Bryan Stewart, and Hillary Stewart—members of Leadership Ohio Class of 2022. The research, recommendations and views expressed are those of the team members and not Leadership Ohio.

This document can be found at: bit.Ly/earnedcredit