



FAITH & FREEDOM COALITION

The Honorable Nathan Manning, Chairman
Criminal Justice Committee
The Ohio House of Representatives
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Manning:

On behalf of the over 1.7 million members of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, a national grassroots movement supporting time-honored values, stronger families, and individual freedom, and the over 60,000 members of Ohio Faith & Freedom, I urge the Ohio House of Representatives to pass H.B 439 to expand access to pre-trial risk assessment tools for Ohio judges and magistrates.

Our faith commands us to care for those who are mired inside the criminal justice system, as Jesus said in Matthew Chapter 25 Verses 36-40: 'I was in prison and you came to visit me ... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

We believe that our justice system should ensure public safety and focus on smart, targeted, and cost-effective reforms that assist in ending the cycle of incarceration that rips apart communities and families. If enacted, H.B 439 would achieve those goals by ensuring that the most dangerous criminals remain behind bars, while defendants who are not a threat to the community and without the ability to pay bail, are properly assessed by the courts.

This legislation would allow magistrates and judges to perform a risk assessment analysis during the pretrial phase immediately following arrest, utilizing the latest tools available. Contrary to arguments made by opponents of the legislation, H.B 439 does not do away with bail schedules for felony or misdemeanor cases. Bail schedules can only be used as the sole arbiter for misdemeanor pre-trial detention cases when a judge or magistrate is not available to use a risk assessment system.

H.B 439 offers Ohio judges and magistrates more effective risk assessment tools to assist in more informed bail decisions based upon a defendants criminal history, employment and family circumstances, and past history of court appearances. While the further use of risk assessments are offered to judges in bail decisions, the bill restricts the courts to only using validated risk

assessment tools results and “to consider all available information” before rendering a decision. The reforms included in H.B 439 still allow judges to use information beyond the risk assessment and further strengthens judicial discretion, while also strengthening their ability to impose alternatives to cash bail including house arrest, unsecured bonds, and GPS monitoring.

The current cash bail system is inefficient in both judicial outcomes and cost to the Ohio taxpayer. Recently, Summit County, Ohio instituted pretrial services reforms similar to provisions contained in H.B 439 and as a result saved the county over seven million dollars in FY 2016.

H.B. 439 will also save Ohio taxpayers millions of dollars per year while also ensuring that Ohio citizens are safer and the state’s criminal justice system produces more positive outcomes by giving judges more discretion and more tools in determining risks that defendants pose to public safety.

Sincerely yours,
Lance Lemmonds
Faith & Freedom Coalition