



TO: Finance Subcommittee on Transportation

FROM: Shakyra Diaz, Alliance for Safety and Justice

DATE: March 21, 2017

RE: House Bill 49

To Chair McColley, Ranking Minority Member Reece, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Transportation. My name is Shakyra Diaz, Midwest Regional Director for The Alliance for Safety and Justice, a project of the Tides Center. The Alliance for Safety and Justice is an organization that aims to win new safety priorities across the country. ASJ brings together diverse crime survivors to advance policies that help communities most harmed by crime and violence. I appear before you today to testify in favor of the state budget criminal justice provisions.

There is no more important role of our justice system than promoting public safety. As you consider the state budget it is key to work towards a system that serves the needs of Ohio's communities and makes them safer, meeting the needs of crime victims and preventing the cycle of crime are of the highest importance. Despite this foundational goal, too many of Ohio's criminal justice resources are wasted on ineffective over-incarceration practices instead of stopping cycles of crime and enhancing victim support. There are smart approaches to stop the cycle of crime through a combination of strategies that emphasize rehabilitation, trauma recovery, graduated sanctions, and incarceration when appropriate. The budget provisions are a strong step that will create a safer, more cost effective criminal justice system in Ohio.

The budget proposal wisely emphasizes rehabilitation, treatment and training for non-violent, low-level offenders. It does this by investing over \$100 million in community resources and by diverting non-violent F5 offenders out of state prison. Those who commit F5 offenses often have mental health or drug addiction challenges. They are people who can be treated and rehabilitated.

They also represent nearly 22 percent of Ohioans sent to prison in 2015 or about 22 percent of those sentenced. Not only will this provide budget savings for the state, but it will result in a safer state by rehabilitating low level offenders instead of sending them to state prison.

This approach aligns with what crime survivors want from the criminal justice. The Alliance for Safety and Justice conducted the first nation survey of victim's views in the country. Victims indicated that they prefer the criminal justice system focus more on rehabilitation than punishment by a margin of 2 to 1. By a margin of 3 to 1 crime victims shared the belief that time in prison make people more likely to commit another crime rather than less likely.

Local safety solutions that hold people accountable through rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, community supervision, or community service are preferable over prison. This budget accomplishes those goals.

A balanced approach to public safety will allow law enforcement and incarceration resources to be focused on serious crime, while more resources go towards prevention and rehabilitation to make our collective communities safer.

If the Alliance for Safety and Justice can be of further assistance please do let us know as we expect to be a resource to you.