



TO: Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Shakyra Diaz, Alliance for Safety and Justice

DATE: March 21, 2017

RE: Senate Bill 66

To Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, 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 to present proponent testimony on Senate Bill 66.

There is no more important role of our justice system than promoting public safety. As you consider criminal justice bills 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. Senate Bill 66 is a step in the right direction towards smart approaches.

By including rehabilitation as a purpose of felony sentencing this bill affirms rehabilitation as a central goal and by extension safety. This 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. Senate Bill 66's provision that expand access to intervention in lieu of conviction to help keep people in community settings to work towards successful rehabilitation broadens the court's toolbox to support safer communities.

Far too many people are entering Ohio's prisons for violations of community control sanctions. For probation alone approximately 23% of those entering prison are doing so for violations of sanctions not new criminal offences. This bill addresses the issue of parole violation sanctions in part by limiting returns to prison to 90 days in prison instead of 9 months for violations of sanctions.

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.