



## House Bill 215 Reagan Tokes Act Proponent Testimony

Chairman Lang, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee: My name is Anthony Caldwell and I am here today providing proponent testimony on House Bill 215, the Reagan Tokes Act, on behalf of the nearly 500 Parole Officers of the Adult Parole Authority represented by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 1199.

Justice delayed is justice denied and now is the time to act on this legislation. We owe it to Reagan's family and to every family in Ohio. One of the most important things we can do as a state is to give families greater peace of mind knowing that when violent felons are released from prison they are properly supervised. For the work of Ohio's Parole Officers, that means addressing a number of problems within Ohio's Adult Parole Authority.

The language in House Bill 215 requiring the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC) and Adult Parole Authority (APA) to establish caseload and workload standards are a welcome change from the lack of current standards which have led to extreme caseloads for parole officers in both rural and urban parts of the state.

Unfortunately, the policies and practices currently implemented by DRC and the APA to address high caseload levels for officers include lowering the recommended supervision level and contact standards for offenders or allowing some parolees to call into an automated telephone reporting system rather than face-to-face contact with their parole officer. If these individuals pose enough of a public safety risk to require supervision after release, why would we reclassify them just to make caseloads look better on paper?

For example:

- A very high-risk offender recommended to be contacted 3 times per month is only required to be seen once per month.
- High-risk offenders recommended to be contacted once per month are only required to be seen once every three months.

Parole officers are fiercely committed to their duty of keeping the public safe and assisting in the reentry of offenders into civilian life.

The following recommendations and guidelines for the establishment of caseload and workload standards align with the legislation's intent to enhance public safety and promote parole officers' ability and capacity to effectively hold offenders accountable:

- Eliminate the practice of the Chin Stat formula or any other weighted formula when computing the number of cases a parole officer is assigned. The number reported should reflect the total number of offenders under supervision by an individual parole officer
- The recommended number of offenders under supervision by an individual officer should not exceed 100 or 60 for officers with less than 12-months experience.
- Require that no more than 20% of a parole officer's cases may be comprised of very high risk or sex offenders.



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- Reduce and eliminate the practice of granting variances and lowering contact standards for offenders for units with extreme caseloads by staffing units appropriately within two years.
- Establish a unit in each region dedicated to respond to and investigate violations by offenders outside of typical work hours (8:00am-4:45pm Monday-Friday).
- Overtime policies for field work must be reexamined to encourage more thorough monitoring and efforts to link offenders with appropriate services, treatment programs and housing and job opportunities.
- Include active senior parole officers from at least 3 regions in the development of caseload and workload standards.
- Ensure parole officers have equal access to the statewide database for GPS-monitored offenders created in the legislation.

Ohio's Parole Officers sincerely appreciate your attention to these issues and look forward to working with the committee to enact reforms to the Adult Parole Authority that will make our communities and our families safer.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today and I will do my best to answer any questions that you may have.

Anthony Caldwell  
Director of Public Affairs  
SEIU District 1199 WV/KY/OH