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TO: House Criminal Justice Committee  
FROM: Gary Daniels, Chief Lobbyist, ACLU of Ohio  
DATE: November 21, 2019  
RE: Senate Bill 140 – Proponent Testimony (Written Only)

To Chairwoman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, I write to express the ACLU of Ohio's support for Senate Bill 140.

As the committee previously heard, SB 140 removes the current prohibitions and criminal penalties against the manufacturing, sale, providing to another, and possession of certain knives, including switchblade, springblade, and gravity knives, and similar devices.

ACLU offices around the country have previously advocated for and testified in favor of removing or reforming these laws for a variety of reasons including:

- \* The demonstrated use of such laws by law enforcement to harass, intimidate, stop and search, and prosecute people of color and others. (Research in New York City revealed people of color account for up to 88% of arrests for mere possession of such knives in that city).
- \* The fact many carry such knives as part of their professional duties yet sometimes run afoul of law enforcement simply because they are in possession of such devices.
- \* As a partial answer against the desire of state and local governments to continue packing our prisons and jails. That is, so long as these numbers continue to climb, they must be reduced elsewhere to help alleviate our mass incarceration crisis. This is especially relevant in Ohio where are prison population will exceed record numbers in the coming years and many of our jails are dangerously overcrowded.

In Ohio, our criminal justice system is still not anywhere close to a point where we can enjoy complete and reliable statewide data about such matters as who is arrested and convicted, and why, or how long they remain incarcerated. Still it is hard to believe the problems experienced in other states with regard to enforcement of outdated and unnecessary knife laws are not being repeated here.

For these reasons and more, we encourage your passage of Senate Bill 140.