

Proponent Testimony for H.B. 215 – Judi Phelps

Thank you Chair Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland and Criminal Justice Committee Members, for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today concerning H.B. 215, which serves to modify corrections law, including reentry and GPS monitoring.

My name is Judi Phelps. I am a wife, a mom and a small business owner of On Guard Defense. We're a self-defense training center and shooting range in the Hocking Hills region of southeast Ohio. I come to you today to speak of the dire need to support this bill – because it's a "no brainer".

A little over three years ago, a piece of property located just doors away from my residence went up for sale. My husband and I were nearly empty-nesters having raised a blended family that includes seven children. We were looking toward a way to plan for our futures as they pursued theirs and, as entrepreneurs, we had our hearts set on opening a business that would lend to growing our local economy in one of the poorest counties in the state of Ohio while doing something we were passionate about and that could help others for greater good.

After evaluating our talents and options, we purchased the property with the goal of opening the business we have today. We were focused on empowering individuals to train and prepare to stare into the face of the evil that surrounds us, if it presented itself to us or the ones we love.

I can tell you that I had the utmost passion toward our end goal, but also had doubts as to whether there would be a place for me, as a female firearms instructor, among a sea of male counterparts who had much more experience than I did with regard to military and / or law enforcements backgrounds.

Then came Reagan Tokes...this young, beautiful, smart, hard-working college student! She was mere months from graduating with her Bachelor's degree when the news reported her missing from her place of employment just outside of OSU campus. I couldn't believe it! I, like so many others, prayed for a positive outcome for Reagan and her family only to learn a short time later that they found her. Dead. In a Grove City park from bullet wounds to her head.

As the evidence was brought to light, so were the dirty details. It was that moment that I knew that I was called to do what I do. Speaking up and out for Reagan, her family, her friends and for those that didn't even know her, as well as for those who have been victimized at the hands of MONSTERS – like what happened to Reagan and what happened to me. To prepare them in any way I could to survive and thrive if they were ever attacked.

Reagan left her shift after work and proceeded to her car parked nearby. She was confronted by a MONSTER – and I dare not dignify or recognize him in any way by his

name because he doesn't deserve it! He was and is a MONSTER!

This MONSTER proceeded to kidnap Reagan, to rob Reagan, to rape Reagan, and to ultimately MURDER Reagan – all while being a prior convicted felon with a rap sheet longer than my arm who was fitted with a GPS ankle monitoring device provided courtesy of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Moreover, we learned that the GPS ankle monitor was, in fact, NOT being monitored effectively, if at all! I believe that mistake cost Reagan her life that fateful night!

I am no stranger to the legal system so I know all too well the fact that there are so many criminal offenders among us that, because our prisons are bursting at the seams, are turned out to coexist among the citizenry.

I understand that folks who are entrusted with the ability to weigh the bad vs. the ugly are often forced to make hard decisions in which felons are let loose via GPS monitoring as opposed to remaining behind lock and key. What I don't understand is that we allow these criminals back into the general population with GPS monitoring devices but FAIL miserably in actually "MONITORING" those devices to insure that they do not offend once again, which was precisely the case with Reagan – with deadly consequences! There is NO excuse for this and it cannot be tolerated!!

Last Saturday marked the third year since Reagan was so brutally and viciously taken from this world. My heart aches for her parents, her friends and those that knew and loved her, as well as for so many other families that have suffered similar atrocities.

I refuse to sit idly by and allow Reagan's name or memory to die with her. To me, she lives on forever and I will do everything I can do so that no one forgets her name. Reagan, in and of herself, was a shining light with the world before her only for it to be snatched away by evil. She represents far more than just herself, which was more than enough; but she represents all women, all girls, all of those that have fallen prey to the evil that surrounds us.

I ask that you take a stand today for Reagan and all those that, for whatever reason, are nameless and voiceless yet succumbed to a similar fate. We need to stand up for the vulnerable among us – namely women, children, the elderly and the disabled. WE MATTER! And we depend on you, as our elected legislators, to take a firm stand for us by moving forward H.B. 215 so that it may be adopted into law in short order, as to spare any other parents and families the grief and despair in having to bury their beautiful loved ones due to the evil among us. It's the same evil that discourages any of you from supporting this worthy cause – so don't let it happen.

I sincerely appreciate your time and attention to this critical issue.