



Office of the Ohio Public Defender

Timothy Young, State Public Defender

**Testimony in Opposition of SB231
Violent Offender Registry
Sponsor: Senator Gardner**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, my name is Laura Austen – I am the Deputy Director of Policy and Outreach at the Office of the Ohio Public Defender (OPD). Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of the OPD in opposition of Senate Bill 231.

Sub. SB231 establishes a presumption that individuals convicted of one of the delineated offenses will have to register annually with their local sheriff's office for a period of 10 years. The database of violent offenders will be a public record available to anyone who requests it from the sheriff's office. There is a lack of evidence SB231 will prevent future crimes that the bill seeks to address. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), supports research projects to examine another type of public registration – sex offender registration – more specifically the effects of sex offender registration, notification, and residency restriction laws. NIJ notes that while these laws are popular, there “has been very little evidence of their effectiveness in reducing crime.”¹ .

The OPD also notes that information available to the public under SB231 does not include context for each person who is listed. There will be no explanation that the individual on the list may have only been eighteen-years-old when they committed the offense and that

¹ National Institute of Justice – Sex Offender Registration, Notification, and Residency Restrictions
www.nij.gov/topics/corrections/community/sex-offenders/pages/registration-notification.aspx

they spent significant time in prison working hard to improve and educate themselves. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding an individual's admission to the database, being on the list will cause the public to assume those people should be feared and loathed. These types of misconceptions can create hurdles for those who have paid their debt to society to find housing, establish employment, and successfully reenter society.

Finally, OPD opposes the bill because, as this committee knows, Ohio is suffering from a prison overcrowding epidemic. SB231 creates yet another new felony offense. Under the bill, failure to register for the database annually is a felony of the fifth degree. Instead of allowing individuals to move past their mistakes and become productive members of society, this bill creates new requirements that may lead to additional criminal convictions and additional time in prison.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

