

Committees:

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Sponsor Testimony
House Bill 356
Before the House Committee on Criminal Justice

November 10, 2021

Chair LaRe, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 356.

Opioid overdose deaths in Ohio is the topic we're here to discuss today. Everyone should know by now that opioid addiction is a problem. I am not here to sell you on whether this is an issue that continues to need addressing. However, I will tell you that in 2019, there were 119,850 high school graduates in Ohio. Also in 2019, according to ODH, 4,028 Ohioans died from unintentional overdose deaths. That number of deaths divided by the number of graduates equals 3.3% of the graduating class of 2019. Taking that as an average each year, when every high school graduating class has walked across the stage in Ohio, we are losing at the same time the equivalent of 3 to 4% of those students.

Furthermore, in 2007, ODH reported that unintentional drug poisonings became the leading cause of injury death, surpassing motor vehicle deaths. I won't try to sell you anymore about the problem.

How does HB 356 propose to solve this problem? I want to focus on the treatment side of this bill.

- This bill creates a process for the creation of Addiction Treatment Facilities (ATF) for incarceration, treatment, and job training.
- This bill would allow a criminal defendant with an addiction issue to apply to the court for rehabilitation at an Addiction Treatment Facility.
- This bill requires that a program participant be supervised by an ATF for 3 years after release.
- This bill requires those incarcerated at an ATF to work 40 hours per week.
- This bill requires that earnings be held, invested, and returned to the program participant at their release.

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- This bill requires the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to develop a proposal for the establishment of ATFs outside of DRC, whereby an individual may voluntarily and irrevocably commit to treatment.
- This bill requires each sheriff in each county to operate at least one restitution work program to which eligible offenders may be sentenced or transferred through sentence modification.
- And finally, this bill, allows for the warrantless search of an offender during the period of an offender's conditional release from an ATF, probation after release from an ATF, or probation through a restitution work program.

There are some major changes for Ohio in this bill. However, Representative Loychik and I believe that major changes are needed and necessary to slow and stop the leading cause of injury death in Ohio: the opioid crisis.

Thank you Chair LaRe and members of the committee. We stand ready to answer your questions.