

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

My name is Shana Barker. I arrived at the Oriana house facility on October 18th, 2018, to serve the remaining 6 months of a three-and-a-half-year sentence under transitional control. This was not my first state incarceration, however thus far it has proved to be the last. I want to stress the importance of the opportunity's this program gave me, beginning with my self-esteem.

As I began the program, I became involved in groups and classes, most notably Individualized Outpatient treatment (IOP). At the Ohio reformatory for women, drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs are scarce at best and very difficult to get placed in. This is because the requirements are not based off need or desire to change, they are based off of how much time your sentence is. Needless to say, by the time the opportunity came for me, I was already involved in a vocational program with mandatory attendance, so I wasn't able to get any help for my chemical dependency problem while I was there. Personally, I find that astonishing because all of my incarcerations were a direct result of my behavior while under the influence of or seeking drugs. I was grateful for the opportunity to be involved in IOP and I took advantage of it.

I learned about my disease and why I wasn't able to beat it on my own. I learned coping skills to deal with cravings and other psychological phenomena that has perplexed me for years! I developed a relapse plan, preparing me for the future in case I found myself in dangerous territory. Most importantly though, I learned that I CAN stay sober and I CAN be a benefit to my family and society.

I need to stress to you the importance of one aspect of TC that is not in the curriculum but proved to be literally life saving for me. When I came home from prison, my family was in shambles. My mother, who was raising my son, was in the early stages of dementia and falling apart. My son, who was 13 at the time, was also falling apart and acting out because he couldn't process what was going on with his grandma. They were living in absolute squalor together, in the home that we shared prior to my incarceration. A home that was clean, pleasant and filled with love. Also, my father was dying, slowly and painfully. All of this I realized once I was back in Akron. You see, no one shared the depths of the despair with me over the phone, so this was all totally overwhelming for me emotionally. Please consider what would have happened to me had I been released from prison and went straight home. I am certain I wouldn't have lasted a month under those circumstances because it was all simply too much for me to manage, and my family hoped and expected me to make things better. Fortunately for us all, I didn't go straight home, I went into transitional control and I was given the time that I needed to develop some stress management skills, set realistic goals for myself and decide what I could and couldn't do to help my family. None of those things would've been possible had I been released straight from Marysville. I am positive of this.

Lastly, I would just like to say that I understand the whole "truth in sentencing" concept. I understand the purpose just as I understand the reasons and situations that got me locked up to

begin with. But at the end of the day, if it's really true that the ultimate goal is to alleviate recidivism and rehabilitate offenders, there is no better way to accommodate that than to give them the opportunity to change in a meaningful way; a way that directly impacts our sobriety, our children and society as a whole. I honestly believe that transitional control saved me from "me" although I didn't know it at the time. I am forever grateful.