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TO: House Criminal Justice Committee

FROM: Gary Daniels, Chief Lobbyist, ACLU of Ohio

DATE: May 2, 2023

RE: Am. House Bill 44 – Proponent testimony

To Chairwoman Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Amended House Bill 44.

As this committee has heard, HB 44 would expand Ohio's public records laws to require recordings of full parole board hearings conducted by the Ohio Parole Board and to allow those recordings and transcriptions to be requested by the public.

The ACLU of Ohio is compelled to support HB 44 because it positively impacts two of our ongoing priorities: Mass incarceration and government transparency.

The Ohio Parole Board has a fundamentally important role and duties within the criminal legal system. Ohio is one of the largest incarcerators of people on the planet. Finally, this committee is familiar with the frustrations of stakeholders at all levels regarding the widespread lack of statewide data about our criminal legal system.

This mix of factors demonstrates the need for HB 44. That is, with its passage comes the hope stakeholders will be able to research, identify, and react to data and information about the Ohio Parole Board and its decisions. From there, perhaps and hopefully, laws, policies, and regulations are changed, if needed.

Too often with legislation affecting the criminal legal system and those Ohioans directly impacted by it, ideas, concepts, and solutions are discussed and acted on with inadequate or non-existent data. HB 44 proves Ohio can do better in this regard and will hopefully lead to additional transparency efforts and victories.

Members of this committee, the ACLU of Ohio believes Amended House Bill 44 is a positive step in the right direction and we urge your support.