

## Written Testimony

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of HB 441.

My name is Tony Luketic and I am a proud parole officer for the State of Ohio serving Cleveland.

HB 441 would greatly benefit officer retention and recruitment. As a former police officer I have a unique perspective. Both occupations are very dangerous. However, as a Parole Officer, we deal all day everyday with violent criminals that have been released from a state prison. Everyday we perform dangerous home visits without adequate equipment or back up. As officers we may be walking into an ambush situation everyday because an individual on parole may believe he is going back to prison. During my employment as a parole officer I can with certainty tell you I have taken more guns off the street than I did when I was a police officer and I started my career as a police officer in 1990 and became a parole officer in 2003..

The world has become a much more violent place. Parole officers in the last few years have been either directly or indirectly involved in seven (7) shootings. That is more than some suburban police departments have in over a decade. The governor and director like to parade us out as helping with all these initiatives to remove guns and violent individuals off the street, partnering with police agencies, but do not recognize us as law enforcement even though we have more officers on federal task forces than the Cleveland Police Department.

We serve a vital function in keeping our communities safe and also serve in a role of assisting individuals to hopefully successfully reintegrate into society. Officers are underpaid and lack the law enforcement pension that they deserve. Passage of HB 441 would address one of those issues and certainly help in recruiting quality individuals and keeping them, instead of being used as a training ground to go to another agency.

I respectfully ask that you support and pass HB 441.

HB 441 will ultimately provide parole officers and with dignity and respect they deserve. If action is not taken swiftly on HB 441, everyday Ohioans and their communities will be the ones in danger.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,  
Tony Luketic