

## Testimony In Support of HB441

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 Paul J. Cieslinski, Jr. and I am a proud senior parole officer for the State of Ohio serving the Cleveland Region.

I am a born and raised Ohioan. I also have eighteen (18) years of experience as a probation and/or parole officer. I have experience in both rural and urban settings as I have been assigned to Ashland, Cuyahoga, Richland and Summit Counties while working here in Ohio.

This career path can be very rewarding and difficult on both the body and the mind. One thing that is common in either rural or urban setting is the prevalence of firearms that I have confiscated resulting in the arrests of multiple offenders on new charges as well as violations. With making arrests, offenders fighting back, as well as searching residences, there are countless dangers we experience every day that the majority of the population does not encounter. Studies have shown that both police officers (Violanti, et. al, 2013) and corrections officers (Jayawardene, et. al, 2024) have a dramatically lower life expectancy than the general population. We have already acknowledged this with police officers and other first responders and have awarded them with only having to do twenty-five (25) years of service before they can retire with full pensions in the state of Ohio. I ask that you make this change for parole officers as well.

After graduating college at the University of Akron in 2006, I accepted employment as a Probation and Parole Officer with the state of Virginia as jobs locally were few and far between. Way back in 2006, Virginia recognized the dangers for Probation and Parole Officer's there and they were already under a law enforcement retirement plan with twenty-five (25) year service requirement.

Not only would this help the current parole officers, but it would be a recruitment tool in the favor of the state of Ohio to attract the best and brightest candidates in a time when the Adult Parole Authority is struggling to find qualified candidates to fill our open positions. In Cleveland we have less people apply and even fewer that are qualified to be parole officers. Our management has offered positions to several qualified candidates, only for them to decline as there would be a pay cut or the benefits would be worse than where they would be coming from.

By having several open vacancies, we are creating a risk to the public by overworking all the current parole officers, adding more cases to their already heavy caseload, which in turn means less time to investigate violation behavior or be proactive in addressing signs offenders are slipping into old patterns when the officers can't see the offenders more

often. This is also an issue in retention as we are seeing good parole officers leaving for other jurisdictions and the federal government as they offer less service time until retirement.

HB 441 will ultimately provide parole officers and with the 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,  
Paul J. Cieslinski, Jr.

Citations:

Violanti, J. M., Fekedulegn, D., Hartley, T. A., Andrew, M. E., Gu, J. K., & Burchfiel, C. M. (2013). Life expectancy in police officers: a comparison with the U.S. general population. *International journal of emergency mental health, 15*(4), 217–228.

Jayawardene, W., Kumbalatara, C., Jones, A., McDaniel, J. (2024). Work Stress and Psychoactive Substance Use among Correctional Officers in the USA. *Psychoactives, 3*(1), 65-77.