

TO: House Government Oversight Committee

FROM: Gary Daniels, Chief Lobbyist, ACLU of Ohio

DATE: April 29, 2025

RE: House Bill 31 – Proponent Testimony

To Chairman Hall, Vice Chair Ferguson, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 31.

As this committee has heard, HB 31 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 and received by the public.

The ACLU of Ohio is compelled to support HB 31 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, there is much frustration at all levels from stakeholders and advocates regarding the widespread and unacceptable lack of statewide data about our criminal legal system.

This mix of factors demonstrates the need for HB 31. 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 31 proves Ohio can do better in this regard and will hopefully lead to additional and expanded transparency efforts and victories.

Members of this committee, the ACLU of Ohio believes House Bill 31 is a positive, bipartisan step in the right direction and we urge your support.



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