

**Opposition Testimony to HB 5**  
**Accompanying Returning Citizens With Hope**  
**April 2, 2025**



Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Matthews, Ranking Member Iassachon, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Wendy Tarr, and I am the Executive Director of Accompanying Returning Citizens with Hope (ARCH), a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals through in-prison programming and reentry services. Our work focuses on vocational training, housing assistance, reentry planning, and wraparound support to help formerly incarcerated individuals successfully reintegrate into society.

I am here today to voice my strong opposition to House Bill 5. While I share the goal of improving public safety, this bill takes the wrong approach by simply increasing sentencing lengths and incarceration costs without addressing the root causes of gun violence and recidivism. Instead of making our communities safer, HB 5 will lead to greater taxpayer burdens, hinder successful reintegration, and fail to deter crime in a meaningful way.

**1. The Cost of Incarceration Will Increase Without Clear Public Safety Benefits**

HB 5 will significantly increase incarceration times, leading to higher costs for Ohio taxpayers. The state already spends billions on corrections, and adding more years to sentences means more money diverted from programs that prevent crime. Research consistently shows that longer sentences do not deter crime—instead, they strain state budgets, overburden prisons, and reduce resources for rehabilitation. Public safety dollars should be invested in evidence-based solutions such as violence intervention programs, education, and reentry support rather than expanding prison terms.

**2. Longer Sentences Hinder Reintegration and Reduce Access to Rehabilitation**

Longer incarceration does not equate to better rehabilitation. In fact, it often has the opposite effect. Many people serving long sentences are denied access to meaningful educational, vocational, and rehabilitative programming because of limited availability and access that is based on the time left to the person's release date. Instead of giving individuals the tools to succeed upon release, HB 5 keeps them incarcerated without addressing the factors that lead to repeat offenses.

**3. Public Safety Is Better Served by Intervention, Not Just Punishment**

As someone who opposes gun violence and values public safety, I believe that smart, evidence-based policies are the key to reducing crime. Instead of investing in longer incarceration which will make their reentry even more challenging, Ohio should be expanding intervention programs that prevent violence before it happens. Programs such as community-based violence prevention initiatives, cognitive behavioral therapy, job training, and mental health services have been proven to reduce recidivism and improve public safety more effectively than extended prison terms. For example, the Bard Prison Initiative found that investing \$1 in prison education resulted in \$4 to \$5 savings in reincarceration costs within three years.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, alternatives like extended probation, supervised release programs, and restorative justice initiatives can hold individuals accountable without trapping them in a cycle of incarceration. If we want to reduce gun violence, we need comprehensive solutions that address poverty, trauma, and lack of opportunity—factors that contribute to crime in the first place.

## **Conclusion**

HB 5 is an expensive and ineffective response to crime. It will cost taxpayers more money, limit rehabilitation opportunities, and fail to improve public safety in a meaningful way. Ohio should be investing in solutions that work—education, intervention, and reentry programs—not just longer sentences. Aligning criminal justice policies with fiscal conservatism involves recognizing the economic inefficiencies of prolonged incarceration and embracing rehabilitation-focused strategies. This paradigm shift promotes enhanced public safety outcomes and prudent fiscal management.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

**Wendy Tarr**  
**Executive Director**  
**Accompanying Returning Citizens with Hope (ARCH)**

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<sup>1</sup>[https://bpi.bard.edu/news-stories/news/how-prison-education-can-save-taxpayers-money/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://bpi.bard.edu/news-stories/news/how-prison-education-can-save-taxpayers-money/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)