

2nd House District

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Latyna M. Humphrey  
State Representative

Ohio's 2<sup>nd</sup> House District

Committees

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**Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Synenberg, and members of the House Judiciary Committee**, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on **House Bill 211**.

House Bill 211 makes an important and compassionate change—one that would positively impact the lives of thousands of Ohio children. This bill would require courts to consider whether an offender is the **primary caretaker of a child** before imposing a sentence or determining eligibility for **intervention in lieu of conviction**.

This legislation recognizes a simple but powerful truth: **incarceration doesn't just affect the person behind bars—it affects entire families, especially children.**

In Ohio today, thousands of children have a parent who is incarcerated. These children often endure emotional trauma, financial instability, and educational setbacks that can shape their lives for years to come. Too often, these challenges perpetuate cycles of poverty and incarceration across generations—and as the child of a returning citizen, I know firsthand how true that is.

Let me be clear—**House Bill 211 does not eliminate accountability**. This is not a “get out of jail free” card. It doesn't require leniency or limit judicial discretion. What it does is ensure that judges have the **full picture** when making sentencing decisions. When a parent—particularly a primary caregiver—faces sentencing, the court would be explicitly required to consider the potential impact on that child and whether a **community-based alternative** could serve justice more effectively.

In many cases, alternatives such as **community control sanctions, treatment programs, or intervention in lieu of conviction** lead to better outcomes—for families and for public safety. Allowing a parent to remain employed, engaged in treatment, and present in their child's life can prevent long-term harm and reduce recidivism.

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States such as Tennessee, Louisiana, and Oregon, which have enacted caretaker consideration laws, have seen improved family stability and smoother reintegration for returning citizens.

In short, House Bill 211 strengthens Ohio's justice system by adding **context, compassion, and fairness**—ensuring that our courts uphold accountability **without tearing families apart unnecessarily**. This legislation, to put simply, has the child's welfare in the center of it all.

Again, House Bill 211 is not about giving anyone a free pass—it's about giving our courts the **tools and information** they need to make more informed, equitable, and human-centered decisions.

I want to thank my joint sponsor, Representative Williams, for his partnership on this bill, and I thank you, Chair Thomas, for bringing it forward.

**Chair Thomas and members of the committee**, I respectfully ask for your support of this legislation. I'd be happy to answer any questions.