

## Testimony of Jon and Karen Ritter – Senate Bill 295, House Judiciary Committee

Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Synenberg, and esteemed Members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for allowing us this sacred opportunity to speak on behalf of shattered victims and grieving families across our communities. Today we stand before you not merely as advocates, but as heartbroken parents whose world was torn apart, pleading for Senate Bill 295 to spare others the unimaginable agony we carry every single day.

We offer our deepest gratitude to Senator Manning and Senator Patton. They didn't just listen—they took our raw pain to heart through their compassion for Jamieson and for every family in Ohio into this critical legislation.

This vital revision will spare families like ours—the Ritters, Beatrice Porter's loved ones, and all victims of violent crime—from the emotional trauma inflicted

by a flawed restoration process handcuffed to be bound by a mere one-year limit. It is our only remaining hope.

Many of you already know the nightmare we live: We are Jon and Karen Ritter, the parents of Cleveland Police Officer Jamieson Ritter—our son, whose smile, gentle heart, and fierce dedication to protecting others were stolen from us on July 4, 2024, when he was feloniously slain by Delwante Hardy. That day, meant for fireworks and celebration, became the darkest moment of our lives.

It is an honor to stand here before the House Committee and give testimony. At the same time it is gut wrenching to stand here begging you to pass Senate Bill 295 by February 18, 2026, so these reforms can still apply to Jamieson's case before the final deadline of February 20, 2026. The clock is ticking, each passing day feels like another piece of justice being ripped away from us.

The current one-year restoration period has opened

a path to injustice, exposing systemic failures at the Central Ohio Behavioral Hospital (COBH) that left our family in ruins. COBH failed to notify the court that Hardy refused court-ordered medication for five long months—not a single word, not a single update. Senate Bill 295 will change that: facilities must now report refusals within 14 days, immediately tolling the clock, and must deliver structured progress reports exactly as ordered, which they failed to do.

These changes will protect our communities by closing dangerous loopholes. When defendants know they only need to endure one year, they can fabricate symptoms, feign delusions, and manipulate the system. One year is not enough for doctors to truly know a patient, gain insight or spot calculated malingering. The five-year window will bring real accountability, end bureaucratic failures, and ensure the untreated, untried, and unrepentant cannot simply walk free.

Opponents worry this will clog the system or take beds from others. But these crimes involve only a

fraction of forensic patients. Your highest duty is to public safety. Over one in five forensic psychiatric patients reoffend violently—even while under outpatient supervision. That statistic is not abstract; it is Jamieson's murder. It is the red flag we can no longer ignore.

Two evaluations said Hardy was restorable within one year—just as he was restored in only two months for prior misdemeanor charges. Facing thirteen felony counts, including four aggravated murders and four life sentences without parole, his incentive to resist can easily be squandered by not complying. Senate Bill 295's stronger provisions will deter such games and demand a fair restoration process.

Though no law can bring back our son, this bill can deliver accountability for Hardy, and protection for other families. It can ensure that the thin blue line Jamieson died defending actually holds.

The time for reform is now—for Jamieson, for Beatrice, for every Ohio family that deserves better.

In honor of Officer Jamieson Ritter, and with our February 20, 2026, deadline looming like a gathering storm, we plead with you from the depths of our broken hearts: Act swiftly, act decisively. Pass Senate Bill 295 as if it were for your own child—a pain no parent should ever endure. Let justice prevail before it slips away.

Thank you.