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Representative Terrence Upchurch 20th House District

House Bill 461 – Sponsor Testimony

Chair King, Vice Chair Kishman, and distinguished members of the House Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony for House Bill 461. This bill will require municipal and county correctional facilities and state correctional institutions to provide inmates who are deaf, hard of hearing, or severely speech impaired with access to teletypewriters, which are essential devices that allow users to communicate using typed inputs.

Our state government has the opportunity and responsibility to ensure that the basic needs of our incarcerated population are met, so that we may respect the dignity of those who are incarcerated and help them on the road to rehabilitation. Our justice system should exist to provide indemnification for those who have been harmed, ensure the safety of the public, and provide new opportunities for those who have been reformed. We cannot meet those objectives if we do not provide our incarcerated population with the most basic human necessities.

As many of you know, Ohio's prisoners are allowed to make limited calls to friends and family members while they are incarcerated. This limited allowance is even further restricted for those who are hard of hearing due to the lack of teletypewriters in our prisons. It is the most basic, fundamental right for every incarcerated person to have some form of interaction with their friends and family members.

Isolation does not support an individual in their journey to reform, and it can act as a direct inhibitor to personal growth. We currently provide our incarcerated population with basic human necessities such as healthcare and food, and it is in accordance with this responsibility to provide teletypewriters as well. It is my hope that by improving the conditions of Ohio's correctional facilities, we will encourage rehabilitation and reform for those who are incarcerated. I urge your support for this bill, and I am willing to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terrence Upchurch", written over a horizontal line.

Terrence Upchurch
20th House District