

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HB 23 – Escaped Convict Alert Program
Sponsor Testimony

Prepared by Chairman Bill Roemer and Majority Whip Josh Williams
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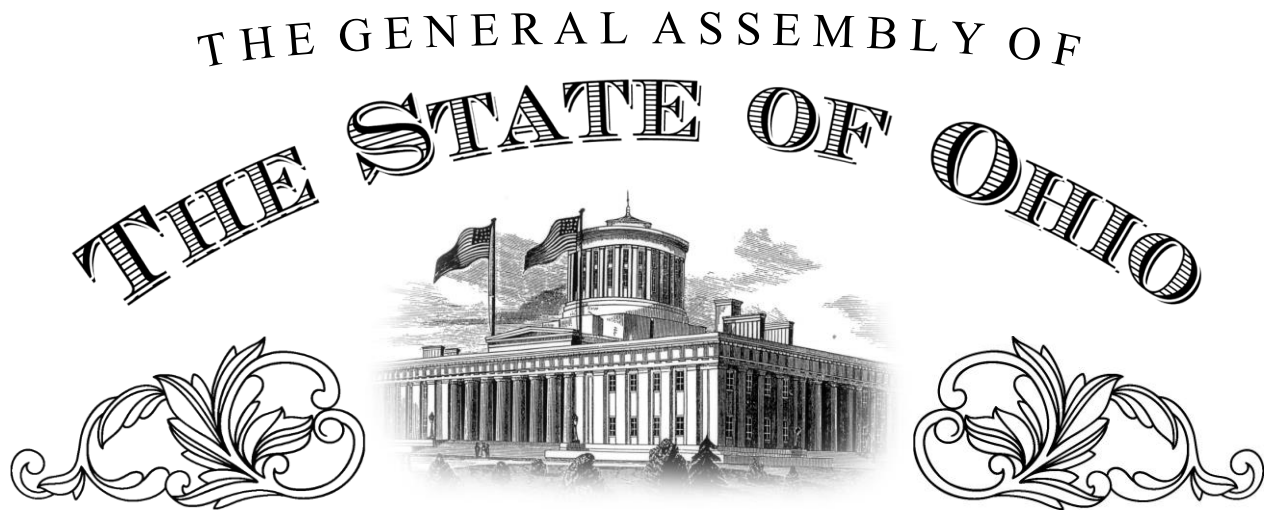
Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Brent, and Members of the esteemed Committee on Public Safety, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on **House Bill 23** which creates the **Escaped Convict Alert Program** or ECAP for short.

This legislation is deeply personal to me, rooted in a moment that was both unsettling and eye-opening. Last Fall, I was working away from my home—completely unaware that a dangerous individual, an escaped convict, fled from custody and was hiding on my very street. I only learned about the situation, through a friend who had received a **Nixle** notification that was checking-in on my wellbeing. I'm not subscribed to **Nixle** alerts, and like most others, I simply had no idea there was an immediate public safety threat in Richfield. I immediately phoned my wife instructing her to secure the doors and windows – a precautionary action that should have been prompted by an official public safety alert, not left to chance or word of mouth.

It was a terrifying realization—that critical, time-sensitive information about a public danger was available, but inaccessible to those who hadn't opted into a specific third-party notification system. It raises the question: how many others are left in the dark during similar emergencies?

That moment prompted me to dig deeper, and what I found was even more alarming—a pattern of multiple escapes occurring within Summit County. This wasn't an isolated event, and the system in place to alert the public was clearly insufficient. The public deserves better when it comes to timely, consistent, and accessible warnings about immediate threats to their safety.

That is why I introduced this bill—to close the communication gap and to ensure that when a dangerous felon escapes custody, Ohioans are not left unaware and unprotected.



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Building on Representative Roemer's compelling personal experience and the evident need for more consistent public notifications during critical times, I'd like to walk the committee through the structural elements of **House Bill 23**.

It creates the **Escaped Convict Alert Program (ECAP)**, which allows law enforcement to issue timely, targeted alerts – akin to Amber Alerts – when a person who has been convicted of, pleaded guilty to, or been charged with a felony offense escapes from custody, whether from jail, workhouse, or correctional facility.

Specifically, the bill provides the following:

- Authorizes law enforcement to issue regional alerts at their discretion, providing a structured option to inform the public when warranted.
- Allows for local or regional adaptations of the alert system, ensuring flexibility for jurisdictions with existing programs.
- Grants liability protections to broadcasters and systems that participate in good faith, regardless of whether an alert is ultimately broadcast.
- Clarifies that ECAP does not permit use of the federal Emergency Alert System unless expressly allowed by federal law.

In short, H.B. 23 strengthens our public safety framework by enabling swift, responsible communication during high-risk situations—without imposing undue liability or operational burdens. We respectfully urge the committee's support and are happy to answer any questions.