

2nd House District

Franklin County

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Latyna M. Humphrey
State Representative

Ohio's 2nd House District

Committees

Government Oversight
(Ranking Member)
Energy
Community
Revitalization
Public Safety

Good Morning Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 31, legislation I introduced with Representative Stewart to strengthen transparency and accountability within Ohio's parole process. I am pleased to share that this bill passed the Ohio House unanimously with a vote of 92-0, demonstrating broad bipartisan support.

Purpose of HB 31

Under current law, parole hearings in Ohio are **not automatically recorded**, nor is there any requirement that transcripts be produced. Instead, only a brief summary digest is created. In hearings that determine whether a person may return home or remain incarcerated, this lack of documentation leaves victims, families, attorneys, and the public without a clear and verifiable record of what occurred.

In our court system, every proceeding that affects a person's liberty is transcribed by a certified court reporter or stenographer. This ensures there is a complete and reviewable record of what was said, what evidence was considered, and how decisions were reached.

Court transcripts allow:

- victims and families to understand the process,
- attorneys to review decisions for accuracy, and
- the public to maintain confidence in the administration of justice.

By contrast, parole hearings—where decisions can be just as consequential—do not have a stenographer, do not produce transcripts, and are not guaranteed to have any recording at all. A digest simply cannot provide the same level of accuracy or accountability.

HB 31 begins to close this gap by ensuring that, when requested, an accurate electronic recording is made so that all parties can rely on a transparent and trustworthy account of the hearing.

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What the Bill Does

1. Creates a Request-Based Right to a Recording

✓ Correct per 5149.102(B)(1)

HB 31 allows certain individuals to request that any parole board hearing be electronically recorded. When someone entitled to a recording makes that request in advance, the Parole Board must record the hearing.

Those entitled include:

- the victim,
- the individual subject to the hearing,
- their attorney, and
- the prosecuting attorney.

Recording is **not automatic**; it is created **only upon request**.

2. Full Board Hearings Become Public Records

✓ Correct per 5149.102(C)

For **full parole board hearings**, which involve the entire Parole Board and carry the greatest weight, any recording made upon request becomes a **public record** under Ohio law, subject to existing redaction requirements for victim information.

3. Institutional & Revocation Hearings Remain Confidential

✓ Correct per 5149.102(B)(1)–(2)

Recordings of institutional hearings, revocation hearings, and post-release control hearings do **not** become public records. These recordings may only be provided to individuals legally entitled to receive them and must be kept confidential.

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Those entitled to request these recordings include:

- the person who is the subject of the hearing,
- their attorney,
- the prosecuting attorney, and
- the victim.

These individuals may request that a hearing be recorded, and when they do so, the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction must provide that recording.

Recipients are prohibited from:

- copying the recording,
- sharing or distributing it, and
- posting it online.

✓ This matches the exact statutory prohibitions in **5149.102(B)(2)**.

This ensures transparency where appropriate, while protecting sensitive information.

Why This Matters

Transparency is foundational to public trust—especially when decisions affect victims, community safety, or a person's liberty. Ensuring a reliable record exists when requested promotes fairness, prevents misunderstandings, and provides clarity for families, attorneys, prosecutors, and the individuals most impacted.

This bill is a balanced approach that modernizes the parole process without placing unnecessary burdens on the Parole Board or compromising confidentiality.

ODRC Collaboration and Amendment Update

Before I close, I want to note that the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction is in support of HB 31. We are currently working collaboratively

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with DRC on a couple of amendments that will make the bill more concise, more workable for the agency, and clearer in implementation. With those amendments, ODRC has indicated they will be fully supportive of the legislation. We appreciate the department's engagement and look forward to bringing those amendments to the committee soon.

Transparency is fundamental to democracy, particularly when decisions affect individuals' rights and freedoms. House Bill 31 ensures that, when requested, all parole hearings are properly documented, and that recordings of Full Parole Board Hearings are made available as public records. This framework gives victims, families, and communities across Ohio meaningful access to accurate information, while preserving confidentiality protections for sensitive hearings.

I urge your support for this legislation to bring accountability and transparency to Ohio's parole process. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I am happy to answer any questions.