Senator Michele Reynolds

Ohio Senate 3rd District

Sponsor Testimony on SB 291

Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 291 with Chair Manning.

Inconsistencies within Ohio's criminal justice system give way to confusion and uneven outcomes in different parts of the state. Practices vary significantly for measures like community control, judicial release, probation, and supervised sanctions. Offenders often don't have clear release pathways, even after meeting their requirements. The wide variation in community control sanctions also makes enforcement unpredictable, and adds undue complexity to monitoring restitution and compliance. In addition, current statutes do not cohesively integrate probation and parole authority, community service requirements, or DUI restrictions.

Senate Bill 291 addresses these challenges by harmonizing Ohio's sentencing and community control systems. The bill establishes a clear notice and recommendation process for judicial release from the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, with a rebuttable presumption in favor of release for qualifying offenders. Courts will also be required to hold timely hearings and consider programming, work assignments, and disciplinary history.

Senate Bill 291 not only clarifies key procedures but also strengthens accountability measures across the board. The bill defines guidelines for the duration, modification, and enforcement of community control sanctions. Courts will retain their discretion to reduce sanctions for exemplary compliance while extending terms when needed for restitution or treatment. Probation and parole searches are standardized, with clear written notice requirements. The bill also clarifies limits on supervised community service, allowing offenders who cannot pay fines to satisfy their obligations through service, and implements strengthened enforcement for ignition interlock compliance and restricted licensing for DUI offenders, especially those with repeat violations.

Senate Bill 291 strengthens Ohio's criminal justice system and promotes public safety while supporting restoration and reintegration. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.