Alliance for Safety and Justice

March 11, 2026

Dear Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important effort. We are proud to support Senate Bill 291 and Ohio state leaders advancing this and other improvements to our public safety systems.

The Alliance for Safety and Justice is a multi-state organization that promotes effective approaches to public safety, and Ohio is one of our priority states. Our flagship project, Crime Survivors Speak, works to advance policies that help underserved crime victims and stop cycles of crime, and has over 13,000 members in Ohio.

Research-based community control is a powerful public safety tool. It allows courts to craft individualized sentences that prioritize accountability, require active and consistent participation in treatment and programs to address the underlying drivers of crime, and keep people in the workforce and supporting their families. And like any tool, following the evidence on best practices achieves the best results.

SB 291 is a public safety priority because **Ohio is currently a national outlier in its overreliance on community control.** Ohio's community control supervision rate is one of the highest in the nation, and twice the national average.[1] Also, as a consequence, technical rule-breaking violations of supervision are a leading driver of prison admissions. This overuse of supervision is undermining public safety by driving recidivism rates up, weakening the Ohio workforce, and using resources that could instead be focused on preventing crime and supporting victims of violent crime.

SB 291 is a balanced bill to make community control a more effective public safety tool by advancing three key goals: making supervision focused on the time period that brings the best public safety return, individualized to promote accountability by addressing the drivers of crime, and an efficient use of public safety resources.

The first goal is that supervision is focused. The research is clear: 12-18 months of supervision is the critical intervention window that brings the biggest public safety return. There is overwhelming consensus on this point among national supervision experts and major professional organizations, including the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA), the National Association of Probation Executives (NAPE), and the International Community Corrections Association (ICCA).[2] Best practices for supervision, such as individualized assessment, supervision requirements, and treatment case planning to address criminogenic needs, are most effective

[1] Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2025). Probation and Parole in the United States, 2023.
[2] EXiT. (n.d.). Statement on the Future of Probation & Parole in the United States; The Pew Charitable Trusts, 33 Criminal Justice Professionals Endorse New Framework to Improve Probation and Parole.

during this 12-18-month period.[3] What people do while on supervision, and how intensively they do it (also called "dosage") is what matters most for reducing recidivism. The standard treatment periods for supervision interventions, such as the range for drug courts,[4] fit well within the SB 291 tiered structure. The tiered term structure in this bill is also similar to the one the legislature already adopted in 2021 for post release control.

Prolonged supervision that stretches on for years, on the other hand, is associated with higher technical violation rates and *worse public safety outcomes*, including higher recidivism rates.[5] Under current law, community control terms in Ohio can be as long as five years for everyone, including people with minor felonies and the lowest-level misdemeanors. This is out of step with public safety research, and is driving Ohio's status as a national outlier in the overuse of community control. Simply put, placing people on supervision for unnecessarily long terms makes communities less safe.

The second goal is that supervision of people on community control is individualized. This means shaping supervision to prioritize public safety based on the needs and circumstances of each individual. SB 291 includes tools for when things are going well, and also when additional intervention is needed. For example, the bill creates multiple pathways for judges to extend terms up to the current five-year limit to respond to violations, address treatment needs, or ensure program completion or restitution payment. This bill also standardizes a review at the two-year-mark for people who have completed all requirements, which will increase safety by creating a powerful incentive for people on supervision to take responsibility for their own rehabilitation.

SB 291 also creates a structure for tailored responses to low-level rule-breaking, including time in jail, in a community corrections facility, or in needed treatment. Research shows that swift and sure sanctions are most likely to change behavior,[6] and that prison terms are an ineffective response to technical violations.[7] Allowing these sanctions to be served nonconsecutively will hold rule breakers accountable without pulling them out of the workforce.

This approach to responding to technical violations will also reduce the number of people sent to prison in Ohio for non-criminal supervision rule-breaking. Ohio is lagging far behind most other states when it comes to reducing prison admissions for rule-breaking violations, and states like Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas have made twice as much progress in recent years.[8] Many other states have successfully adopted the approach in SB 291 to address this problem.

---

[3] Center for Effective Public Policy. (2014). *Dosage Probation: Rethinking the Structure of Probation Sentences*; Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice. (2020). Examining Prosecutor Perspectives and Practices on Probation in Ramsey County.
[4] National Association of Drug Court Professionals. (2023) *Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards.* (Top-recommended resource in the Supreme Court of Ohio's Adult Drug Court Specialized Docket Guidance.)
[5] Pew Charitable Trusts. (2020). *Policy Reforms can Strengthen Community Supervision: A Framework to Improve Probation and Parole*; Pew Charitable Trusts. (2022). *Five Evidence-Based Policies Can Improve Community Supervision*.
[6] National Institute of Justice. (2012). *"Swift and Certain" Sanctions in Probation Are Highly Effective: Evaluation of the HOPE Program*.
[7] Pew Charitable Trusts. (2022). *Five Evidence-Based Policies Can Improve Community Supervision*.
[8] Council of State Governments. (2024). Supervision Violations and Their Impact on Incarceration.

The third goal is that supervision is efficient, and this means maximizing the public safety returns on our investment. At its core, SB 291 is about advancing one of the most important goals for our 13,000 Crime Survivors Speak members in Ohio: Making sure that what happened to them doesn't happen again. This bill is designed to strengthen community control so that the resources invested in supervision reap the biggest public safety benefits, and savings can be used to prevent crime in the first place and help victims recover.

The changes in SB 291 also maximize the crime prevention benefits of work and family by reducing the likelihood that a low level rule violation will result in extended periods of incarceration far from home that interrupt someone's ability to support and care for their family. Adjusting supervision through focused terms and graduated sanctions to keep people more connected to work and family increases the likelihood that they will stop engaging in crime,[9] and will also boost the Ohio economy.

In conclusion, SB 291 is a balanced bill that reflects common-sense and research-backed improvements to sentencing and corrections that will make communities across Ohio safer. Ohio is in good company in this effort, and states including Alaska, Alabama, Hawaii, and Texas have all revised their supervision term structures in recent years to more effectively support public safety.[10] The bill, filed as HB 288 last session, reflects feedback from key stakeholders, including the Ohio Judicial Conference, the Chief Probation Officers Association, and the Ohio Community Corrections Association.

The provisions in SB 291 have received widespread support from public safety and corrections experts across the country, and we respectfully ask for your support to move them forward.

Leah Sakala
Senior State Policy Manager
Alliance for Safety and Justice

[9] Urban Institute. (2022). *An Assessment of Probation Sentencing Reform in Louisiana and Georgia*.
[10] Pew Charitable Trusts. (2016). 33 States Reform Criminal Justice Policies Through Justice Reinvestment.