June 9, 2026

Written Opponent Testimony on Sub. H.B. 338 ("Andy's Law")

Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
Submitted by: Jennifer Sanders | Ohio Citizen | Retired Ohio Corrections Professional | Opponent

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written opponent testimony on portions of Sub. H.B. 338, also known as Andy's Law. My name is Jennifer Sanders. I submit this testimony as an Ohio citizen and retired Ohio corrections professional. I am not testifying on behalf of any employer, contractor, or organization.

I retired in 2025 from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) after 32 years working in Ohio corrections, spanning juvenile and adult corrections. I served as school superintendent at ODRC and, before that, at the Ohio Department of Youth Services. I also served as a deputy warden at two facilities, and I began my career as a teacher in July 1993, shortly after the Lucasville riot.

I want to begin with the reason this bill exists. In 32 years as a corrections professional, I am aware of too many moments when corrections professionals were injured or traumatized. I condemn violence against corrections staff without reservation, and nothing in this testimony should be read to minimize the death of Officer Andrew Lansing, the suffering of his family and coworkers, or the seriousness of violence inside Ohio's correctional institutions.

My opposition is targeted. I support the goal of protecting staff. I oppose provisions that, in my judgment, remove tools staff need to manage prisons safely and prepare people to return to Ohio communities. As passed by the House, Sub. H.B. 338 would require eliminating higher education programs at high-security state correctional institutions; limit personal tablet assignments in high-security and restrictive-housing settings; require at least 30 days of tablet forfeiture for specified rule violations; restrict vocational-program eligibility at high-security institutions based on serious rule violations; and add employment-history requirements for the ODRC director and wardens. [1]

Staff safety and rehabilitation are not competing goals

After 32 years in Ohio corrections, I know safety is not created by symbolism alone. Safety comes from staffing, classification, supervision, consistent discipline, skilled leadership, and structured programming that gives people a reason to follow rules and a path to change. Education is security. That is not a slogan to me; it is a lesson learned across decades inside institutions.

A person's current placement in a high-security institution does not necessarily mean that person will never leave ODRC or never contribute to facility culture in positive ways. Some people do return to Ohio communities from high-security settings. Even for people serving long sentences, staff must manage them safely every day. Higher education can create structure, accountability, pro-social identity, future orientation, and constructive relationships with instructors and staff.

I have not seen evidence that higher education caused the violence that led to Andy's Law being proposed. Removing college from high-security institutions would punish a tool, not a proven cause. The proper response to misconduct is individualized accountability through classification, discipline, and the Rules Infraction Board process - not categorical removal of programming that supports safety.

Research supports the safety value of education

Ohio-specific research supports the safety value of education. A 2017 Ohio study found that people who earned GEDs or completed college classes were less likely to engage in prison violence and less likely to return to prison within three years. [3] The lesson is to protect program quality, completion, and behavioral expectations - not to eliminate education.

A separate University of Cincinnati evaluation of Ohio prison programs found that college classes and some education-related program combinations reduced institutional misconduct, and that vocational, apprenticeship, college, and other programming were generally effective at lowering recidivism, especially for completers. [4] Nationally, RAND found that correctional education participants had lower odds of recidivating and higher odds of employment after release. [5] The research supports what I have seen in practice: well-run education and structured programming can reduce misconduct, support safer institutions, and improve post-release outcomes.

ODRC's own 2025 Annual Report underscores that education is not a fringe activity. The Ohio Central School System reported FY2025 career-technical education service to 2,167 students with 1,550 CTE certificates earned, apprenticeship service to 3,247 students with 872 apprenticeship certificates earned, and 5,407 Advanced Job Training students. [2] Those numbers represent structure, supervision, skill-building, and accountability inside Ohio prisons. Federal Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated students in approved prison education programs was also restored effective July 1, 2023, making this a particularly poor time for Ohio to categorically close higher education in high-security institutions. [6]

Preserve career-technical, apprenticeship, and reentry programming

I agree that serious misconduct must have consequences. Violence, threats, sexual misconduct, weapons, drugs, gang activity, and similar conduct must be addressed firmly. But the statute should not unnecessarily reduce professional judgment or make people less employable before release. Ohio already has adult correctional CTE infrastructure through ODRC, the Ohio Central School System, and state career-technical partners. [7] The safer approach is to enforce existing behavioral standards, remove people when necessary through fair processes, and let correctional professionals assess risk, conduct, program fit, and facility operations.

Secure tablet access improves safety by reducing sources of security risks

Tablets are not simply an amenity. In my experience, they are also an operational tool. ODRC's mail-processing and digital-delivery practices reduce the amount of physical mail entering institutions and the contraband risk associated with it. [8] Tablets also provide access to a digital library where people can check out books and magazines to read on their tablets. In high security, digital access can reduce movement to and from physical libraries. Tablets also support approved communication, educational content, pre-release coursework, and wellness content.

I understand why tablet misuse must have consequences, but a blanket approach that strips educational, communication, and digital-library functions from whole populations may increase idleness, frustration, and movement. Those outcomes are not safety gains. The better approach is secure access with individualized restrictions for misuse or specific security risk.

Narrowly defined leadership misses great candidates

Custody experience is valuable. I respect that expertise deeply. But it is not the only form of correctional experience that produces good judgment, respect for staff, operational competence, or the ability to lead. Modern wardens and directors must understand security, education, reentry, behavioral health, classification, programming, labor relations, investigations, policy, budget, litigation risk, emergency response, and institutional culture. A statute that unnecessarily excludes non-custody corrections professionals undervalues the full system that keeps prisons operating and narrows the leadership pipeline when Ohio needs strong leaders from multiple disciplines. [1]

Requested amendments

I respectfully ask the Senate to:

1. strike the provision eliminating higher education programs at high-security state correctional institutions;
2. preserve secure access to educational, digital library, pre-release, wellness, approved legal, and supervised communication functions, while allowing individualized restrictions for misuse or specific security risk;
3. govern vocational-program eligibility through evidence-based behavioral criteria, fair disciplinary processes, and individualized review;
4. recognize equivalent senior correctional leadership experience, including facility operations, education, reentry, programming, juvenile corrections, classification, and other correctional-system leadership; and
5. preserve strong accountability for violence and misconduct without removing tools that help staff manage prisons safely and prepare people for lawful reentry.

I share the goal of safer prisons. That is why I am asking the Senate not to remove tools that help create safety. In my experience, education, structured programming, secure technology, and broad leadership expertise are not luxuries. They are part of how correctional institutions manage risk, reduce idleness, support staff, and prepare people to return to Ohio communities. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

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Source list

[1] Ohio General Assembly/Ohio Senate, H.B. 338, 136th General Assembly, Current Version: As Passed by the House; Ohio Legislative Service Commission, H.B. 338 Bill Analysis, Version: As Reported by House Judiciary, Nov. 18, 2025; Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee roster and H.B. 338 committee activity/schedule.

[2] Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, ODRC 2025 Annual Report, Ohio Central School System data for Career-Technical Education, Apprenticeship, and Advanced Job Training, FY2025.

[3] Pompoco, A. R., Wooldredge, J., Lugo, M., Sullivan, C., & Latessa, E. J. (2017). "Reducing Inmate Misconduct and Prison Returns with Facility Education Programs." Criminology & Public Policy, 16(2), 515-547. DOI: 10.1111/1745-9133.12290.

[4] Latessa, E., Lugo, M., Pompoco, A., Sullivan, C., & Wooldredge, J. (2015). Evaluation of Ohio's Prison Programs: Executive Summary. University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute, School of Criminal Justice.

[5] Davis, L. M., Bozick, R., Steele, J. L., Saunders, J., & Miles, J. N. V. (2013). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults. RAND Corporation, RR-266.

[6] U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, GEN-23-05, "Eligibility of Confined or Incarcerated Individuals to Receive Pell Grants," updated Sept. 30, 2024; Federal Student Aid, Prison Education Programs page, last modified Nov. 10, 2025.

[7] Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, "Career Tech in Correctional Institutions," last modified Feb. 11, 2026.

[8] Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, "ODRC Mail Processing Center," Dec. 17, 2024; ODRC, "ODRC continues to fight the influx of drugs and other major contraband in prisons," Sept. 15, 2025.