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# OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research  
and Drafting

Legislative Budget  
Office

**H.B. 556**  
**136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

## **Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement**

[Click here for H.B. 556's Bill Analysis](#)

**Version:** As Introduced

**Primary Sponsors:** Reps. A. Mathews and Williams

**Local Impact Statement Procedure Required:** Yes

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### **Highlights**

- The bill modifications of penalties for technical violations of community control will result in a savings effect on the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC). The magnitude of savings will be a function of the extent to which population is reduced (the number of the offenders who would serve a local term of incarceration instead of a state prison) and whether the state's incarceration expenditures to house those offenders are "institutional" or "marginal." In both scenarios savings are estimated to be in the millions of dollars.
- The bill will increase annual costs for jails by \$93.70 per day per offender to incarcerate technical violators of community control who, absent the bill, would have been prison bound. While this number is also variable from jail to jail, costs statewide may potentially increase by several million dollars annually. Some of these costs may be mitigated to some extent if the violator is sentenced to a more restrictive nonresidential sanction rather than jail.
- Courts will likely experience an increase in the number of determinations and hearings associated with certain requirements made under the bill. The magnitude of the additional work will depend on how many offenders require a review after two years of community control and the frequency at which early termination is denied. Court representatives have indicated that the number of new hearings needed will be significant for some courts and likely commensurate with current case volumes.
- The bill's changes to the maximum periods of community control sanctions will produce an indeterminate fiscal impact on annual operating costs of locally operated probation departments. The magnitude of savings or increased costs would depend on a variety of factors such as the current average caseload sizes of a given department, daily costs of

supervision, the number of offenders who would spend a shorter period of time under supervision than otherwise under current law, and the likelihood that any such offender would commit a new offense or technical violation.

## Detailed Analysis

The bill (1) changes the maximum periods of community control sanctions authorized for felonies and misdemeanors, (2) modifies the definition of “technical violation,” and (3) modifies the sanctions authorized for a technical violation of community control sanction conditions, as outlined in the [LSC bill analysis](#).

These changes will result in a complicated mix of potential outcomes, largely impacting the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC), local courts, jails, and probation departments. The net impact is indeterminate, but in general, it appears there would be a shift in costs from DRC to locally incarcerate certain technical probation violators and a potential mix in savings and/or increased costs for county probation departments. There is no expected impact on parole services.

## Fiscal impact

### Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

DRC operates 28 correctional facilities that house a daily population of approximately 45,000 offenders. Based on national survey data conducted by the Council of State Governments Justice Center, nearly half (47% or 8,908) of Ohio’s prison admissions in 2017 were due to supervisory violations of parole or probation for new offenses or technical violations.<sup>1</sup> Of the 8,908 supervisory admissions, 21% (1,870) stemmed from technical violations of probation.

Table 1 below provides a hypothetical range of annual savings estimates for DRC as a result of the reduction in admissions of technical violations of probation. These ranges are based on the the Council of State Governments Justice Center survey data described in the preceding paragraph.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the data does not distinguish the number of prior violations associated with each incoming offender. Under the bill, a prison term remains a possible sanction that a sentencing court may impose upon an offender’s fourth or subsequent technical violation. The 100% reduction rate is included to illustrate the maximum savings and not so much as a realistic expectation. After factoring in the unknown number of offenders who may still be sentenced to a prison term under the bill, the savings will likely reflect a lower reduction rate.

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<sup>1</sup> The Council of State Governments Justice Center, [How Supervision Violations Are Filling Prisons and Burdening Budgets](#), June 18, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the survey, technical violations are probation violations that are not the result of a new offense.

**Table 1. Estimated Annual Savings for DRC  
(Hypothetical Reduction Scenarios)**

| Reduction Rate of Technical Probation Violators in State Prison | Offenders Diverted from State Prison* | Institutional Savings** | Marginal Savings*** |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 25%   | 468                                   | \$18,716,724            | \$2,301,156         |
| 50%   | 935                                   | \$37,393,455            | \$4,597,395         |
| 75%   | 1,403                                 | \$56,110,179            | \$6,898,551         |
| 100%  | 1,870                                 | \$74,786,910            | \$9,194,790         |

\*Population estimates are based on the Council of State Governments Justice Center's figures.

\*\*\$39,993 annually per offender (or \$109.57 per day)

\*\*\*\$4,917 annually per offender (or \$13.47 per day)

As shown, LBO used two methodologies for calculating the amount of savings for DRC resulting from offenders who would serve a temporary term of incarceration in a local jail rather than a state prison under the bill.

1. The first methodology uses DRC's total incarceration costs (commonly referred to as "institutional costs") which is about \$39,993 annually for each offender (\$109.57 per day x 365 days).<sup>3</sup> Using that figure, and assuming 100% of offenders would have fewer than four technical violations of probation, DRC's annual incarceration costs could decrease by as much as \$74.8 million. For context, DRC's total GRF institutional operating costs for FY 2025 totaled approximately \$1.38 billion.
2. The second methodology for estimating the savings for DRC is based on what is termed "marginal costs." The underlying assumption is that the reduction in population will not be large enough to trigger a reduction in operating expenses related to closing existing dormitories, or reducing the number of prison personnel such as correction officers and unit management staff. Marginal costs include such things as food, clothing, and various inmate services such as medical care. Although DRC's average institutional annual cost per inmate is around \$39,993, its marginal annual cost is around \$4,917 per offender per year (\$13.47 x 365 days). Using the marginal cost figure, and assuming 100% of offenders would have fewer than four technical violations of probation, DRC's annual incarceration costs could decrease by as much as \$9.2 million.

## Local jails

Annual local supervision costs are expected to significantly increase under the bill due to a shift from state to local incarceration for technical probation offenders under the bill. Under the bill, the cascading temporary incarceration penalties for technical violations will generally depend on the number of violations. Notably, some offenders may be sanctioned to jail

<sup>3</sup> See [DRC's 2025 Annual Report \(PDF\)](#).

incarceration, who otherwise might have been sentenced to prison for the duration of possible jail incarceration under the bill is as follows: up to 15 days for a first technical violation, up to 30 days for a second, and up to 45 days for the third. While the costs provided relate to terms in jail, it should also be noted that some violators may be given other available temporary incarceration sanctions, with different maximum terms, such as a term in a community-based correctional facility, halfway house, or alternative residential facility, the costs of which would be variable from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Additionally, the bill, in some cases, allows the sanctions for technical violations to be served intermittently, overnight, or on weekends, or to be suspended for mental or behavioral health treatment, with the sanction terminated upon successful completion.

DRC reports that the 2025 average cost for an inmate in Ohio's jails was \$103.42 per bed per day for full-service jails. This number is based on an average of the self-reported cost per bed provided to DRC by the jails and there is no statewide standard for what each jail may or may not include in these cost estimates. In 2019, the most recent year for which data are available, the number of offenders under the supervision of local jails for Ohio was 20,580 annually statewide.<sup>4</sup>

Table 2 below shows how much incarceration costs may increase for local jails statewide based on the number of offenders estimated to potentially serve a jail term instead of a prison term (see Table 1) and the (\$103.42) per-diem estimate. As mentioned, available data used to estimate the number of offenders shifting from state to local confinement does not distinguish the number of violations associated with each offender. Therefore, the following estimates assume that each offender may serve up to 45 days in jail. There is no reliable way to estimate the amount of time offenders otherwise might have spent in prison, so no such assumption was made for the DRC savings estimates. It is important to note that the actual cost increase will vary from jail to jail based on the number of incoming offenders sanctioned under the bill and that jail's average daily cost.

**Table 2. Estimated Annual Increase in Incarceration Costs for Jails Statewide  
(Hypothetical Reduction Scenarios)**

| Reduction Rate of Technical Probation Violators in State Prison | Additional Offenders for Local Jails Statewide | Maximum Number of Incarceration Days | Additional Costs (2025 rate of \$103.42 x max possible 45 days) |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| 25%   | 468  | 45                                   | \$2,178,025   |
| 50%   | 935  | 45                                   | \$4,351,397   |
| 75%   | 1,403  | 45                                   | \$6,529,422   |
| 100%  | 1,870  | 45                                   | \$8,702,793   |

<sup>4</sup> [Census of Jails, 2005-2019 Statistical Tables \(PDF\)](#).

## Locally operated probation departments

The bill specifies that the duration of all community control sanctions, including any period of supervised community service work, imposed on a felony offender must not exceed five years for any first or second degree felony, and unless extended, three years for any third, fourth, or fifth degree felony. The bill also provides that the duration of all community control sanctions, including any period of supervised community service work, imposed on a misdemeanor offender and in effect for an offender at any time must not exceed three years. The duration of community control sanctions may be extended under certain circumstances. In general, under current law, the duration of all community control sanctions imposed for all felonies and misdemeanors must not exceed five years.

The magnitude of any resulting fiscal impact on locally operated probation departments is uncertain and would be a function of the number of offenders whose probation lengths would be impacted under the bill. While the potential for a savings effect exists, it is also possible that the maximum periods of sanctions established by the bill largely align with current practice. For example, anecdotal evidence provided by field practitioners suggests that probation officers and judges already use their discretion to terminate probation supervision early upon the probationer's successful completion of their terms and conditions of supervision. Research from the Ohio Judicial Conference indicates that the average term on community control in Ohio was 20 months, or around two years for third, fourth, and fifth degree felonies (there is a presumption for prison rather than community control for first and second degree felony offenders). According to the Annual Probation Survey from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 209,600 adults were on probation in Ohio as of January 1, 2023.<sup>5</sup>

## Sentencing courts

The bill requires a court to terminate the community control sanction of a third, fourth, or fifth degree offender if the court determines that (1) the offender has not violated the conditions of their community control in the six months prior to the court's early termination determination, (2) that the offender has completed all required programs, and (3) that termination will not present a risk of serious physical harm. The court must make a determination within 60 days after an offender completes two years of their community control sanction, without a hearing. However, the bill requires a hearing when the court does not terminate community control. The magnitude of additional hearings will depend on the frequency at which early termination is denied. As previously noted, research from the Ohio Judicial Conference indicates that the average term on community control is already around two years.

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<sup>5</sup> [Probation and Parole in the United States, 2023 \(PDF\)](#).