

**Proponent Written Testimony Submitted to the House Criminal Justice Committee
Senate Bill 3 – Drug Sentencing (Eklund, O’Brien)
December 8, 2020**

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and esteemed members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of Senate Bill 3 on behalf of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

In August 2020, the National Basketball Association and National Basketball Players Association made a commitment to increase their advocacy of criminal justice reform, police relations, and voter turnout. Specifically, ***“the NBA and its players have agreed to immediately establish a social justice coalition, with representatives from players, coaches and governors, that will be focused on a broad range of issues, including...advocating for meaningful police and criminal justice reform.”*** While the Cleveland Cavaliers have had a long commitment to supporting the issues that are important to our local community, we took this opportunity to further engage ourselves with this effort. We are proud to join our players and coaches in supporting these advocacy priorities and being a voice for change.

The Cleveland Cavaliers believe that Ohio’s drug sentencing laws should be a central part of the state’s efforts at criminal justice reform. As stated in other previous proponent testimony, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has approximately 2600 individuals who are in prison for drug possession. Not surprisingly, 1600 of those individuals are incarcerated for low-level drug possession.

Senate Bill 3 is a responsible, bipartisan, and necessary approach to sentencing for low-level offenders while also addressing the burden they put on the state’s criminal justice system. The bill provides non-violent offenders with the ability to rehabilitate themselves while at the same time enhancing the likelihood of their successful reintroduction into society by reclassifying certain non-violent, low-level felonies to unclassified misdemeanors. These releases will also address the fiscal burden that mass incarceration and overcrowded jails that costs the taxpayers of the State of Ohio millions of dollars every year. Senate Bill 3 creates a better use for those funds such as drug treatment for those individuals who need it the most.

The players, coaches and leadership team of the Cleveland Cavaliers applaud Senator Eklund and Senator O’Brien, along with this committee, for taking a thoughtful, yet swift approach in prioritizing this piece of legislation. The Cleveland Cavaliers take pride in being civic and community leaders and we encourage our players to do the same. We care deeply about Ohio and feel it is important for us to speak in support of issues like this. Senate Bill 3 is a reflection of a necessary change in Ohio law. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of the passage of Senate Bill 3 and your diligent work in getting this bill passed.