



# LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION PARTNERSHIP

ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

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Date: June 29, 2020

Re: Senate Bill 3

Position: Support

To: the Ohio State Senate Judiciary Committee

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

As police and prosecutors, we have dedicated our lives to serving Ohio and our local communities. The addiction epidemic that Americans are experiencing throughout the country is one of the most complex and critical health issues of our time. We have an opportunity to chart a new path in Ohio, and we believe it is our responsibility to do better.

We are writing to respectfully request that you pass Senate Bill 3. Ohio needs to join 11 other states, including Oklahoma, by prioritizing treatment over incarceration and charging people who commit low-level, non-violent drug possession offenses with misdemeanors instead of felonies. These other states have proven that this reprioritization helps combat addiction with no negative impact on public safety.

Ohio law enforcement has been asked to respond to the addiction crisis by charging people with felony drug possession. We have been doing this for years, and the results have been disastrous. Saddling people with substance abuse problems with felony records does not save lives or reduce the rate of addiction in our communities.

Felony convictions and prison time do nothing to address the underlying problems that cause people to commit drug offenses. In fact, all of the evidence shows that felonies and incarceration for drug possession only worsen the drug problems our communities face. Addiction is a health issue, not one that the justice system is equipped to address. We must begin treating it as such.

In fact, felony convictions for people addicted to drugs are usually counterproductive. A felony means a lifetime of obstacles to employment,

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*Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition*

education, and housing, making recovery even more difficult. It's easier to blame individuals when they relapse than to face the fact that our laws are making the problem worse.

Senate Bill 3 would put the addiction response in the hands of public health professionals instead of law enforcement. It would hold people accountable to working toward recovery, instead of simply threatening and punishing them. It would allow police to connect people to the appropriate resources and to focus instead on the greatest public safety threats, rather than being stretched thin by addiction-related calls for which we are not equipped.

We need common-sense solutions aimed at helping people overcome addiction. Supporting treatment and reducing hurdles for those working towards recovery will help reduce recidivism, lower taxpayer costs, get people back into the workforce, and - most importantly - save lives.

Respectfully,

Chief Tom Synan  
Newtown Police Department, OH

Assistant Chief Tom Thompson (Ret.)  
Miamisburg Police Department, OH

Major Neill Franklin (Ret.)  
Executive Director  
Law Enforcement Action Partnership