

SENATOR VERNON SYKES  
28<sup>th</sup> District



SENATOR NATHAN MANNING  
13<sup>th</sup> District

## **SB 377 Sponsor Testimony** **December 02, 2020**

Chairman Eklund, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 377.

Halfway Houses serve every county in the state of Ohio. They are funded by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) to treat persons involved in the criminal justice system who have cognitive deficiencies or behavioral health disorders, as well as those who may need help finding employment, housing or other social service supports.

One of the most effective programs run by halfway houses is Transitional Control (TC), during which an eligible inmate is transferred under ORC 2967.26 to a community corrections facility for up to the final 180 days of their sentence. All participants in transitional control are screened by DRC to exclude sex offenders, those convicted of violence or an excessive number of felonies, as well as those serving mandatory prison sentences.

Offenders on TC are required to pay a subsistence rate that goes back to the state to offset the costs of the program. Wages are used to pay for child support, restitution, taxes, and outstanding financial obligations. Participating inmates who leave the facility without permission are charged with felony escape. Most significantly, if there are any infractions, TC offenders can be immediately revoked to a state penal institution. I will now turn it over to Senator Sykes to provide additional information into the major components of the bill.

Eighty-four percent of individuals who participate in Transitional Control do not return to prison, **the lowest recidivism rate of all ODRC programs**. However, inmates must currently have a judge's assent to participate. The last available data shows 15 counties in Ohio vetoing more than 80% of TC cases that come before them. Additionally, 19 counties veto more than 50% of all eligible offenders. Senate Bill 377 would eliminate the requirement that a sentencing judge agree to an inmate transfer to the Transitional Control program.

Removing judicial notification places this important decision in the hands of our expert officials at ODRC who monitor the inmate's progress and attitude, and relieves busy judges from having to reacquaint themselves with cases that have long since left a docket. The Federal Bureau of Prison system controls the administrative transfer of inmates to staff secure facilities, and Senate Bill 377 would mirror this process in Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge your support on this bill and am happy to answer any questions.