



December 8, 2022

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Leland and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

My name is Lauren Krisai, and I am the senior state policy manager for the Justice Action Network, a national bipartisan organization that advocates for data driven criminal justice reforms at the state and federal levels that make our justice systems stronger and communities safer. I write in favor of Senate Bill 288 and urge all members of the committee to support it today.

Senate Bill 288 is the product of months of conversations with stakeholders, practitioners, advocates, law enforcement, and lawmakers, and the product that passed the Senate represents a sound compromise between all interested parties.

The bill bolsters incentives for rehabilitation for those incarcerated in an Ohio prison by expanding opportunities to earn additional credits toward a slightly earlier release for completing certain degrees, rehabilitative programs, or any other constructive program developed by the department of rehabilitation and correction with specific standards for performance by prisoners. These earned credits are proven to provide an extra incentive toward rehabilitation, which ultimately reduces recidivism and creates safer communities.

Additionally, the bill improves Ohio's judicial release petition process, providing more clarity to judges and petitioners alike, and strengthening the department-driven petition process.

Further, it's no secret that Ohio has been one of the hardest hit states by the opioid epidemic. As someone who was born and raised in Ohio, I've lost too many former classmates to the opioid crisis and emerging fentanyl crisis. This bill takes evidence-based approaches to help reduce the number of overdose deaths in the state, specifically by expanding Ohio's "Good Samaritan" law. This provision will encourage individuals to seek medical assistance for another person who is experiencing an overdose by protecting them from being prosecuted for simple drug possession themselves. It's no secret that many people suffering from addiction will consume drugs with others who are suffering from the same addiction. Creating a commonsense solution that will result in more emergency calls made and therefore more Ohioan lives saved is sound public policy.

Senate Bill 288 does many other things, and as I mentioned above, it represents many compromises on behalf of advocates who wish it went further, and those who wish it didn't. To us at Justice Action Network, it represents sound bipartisan policy that will create better outcomes for the state of Ohio. We urge you all to vote in support of it today.

Lauren Krisai  
Senior State Policy Manager  
Justice Action Network