Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Wednesday, June 27, 2018

Senate Bill 202 – Proponent Testimony

Good morning, Chairman Colley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee.

My name is Phyllis Carlson-Riehm and I represent ACTION OHIO Coalition For Battered Women, a statewide domestic violence coalition, that advocates for domestic violence survivors and for changes in Ohio laws to ensure public safety and justice for all victims of violence. Thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony for Senate Bill 202, one of two Senate bills named for Reagan Tokes, an OSU 4th year student, abducted, raped and murdered by parolee Brian Golsby.

Senate Bill 202 is intended to ensure that a dangerous, violent repeat offender will be held accountable for his behavior while incarcerated and will have limitations placed on his movements with real-time electronic monitoring upon release. The bill also requires the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and the Adult Parole Authority to provide the necessary controls to ensure public safety and to prevent any more tragedies, like the one experienced by Reagan Tokes and her family.

Provisions include:

* Global positioning system monitoring for offenders released from prison;
* Reentry program for all offenders released from prison who will reside in (but who are not accepted by) a halfway house or similar facility;
* Establishment of maximum work-load and case-load standards for parole and field officers;
* Provision of adequate number of trained officers to comply with the standards;
* Naming the act’s provisions the Reagan Tokes Law.

When Reagan Tokes’s nude, dead body was discovered on February 9th, 2017, at Scioto Grove Metro Park, a nightmare began for her parents, other family members and friends. More than one year later, the nightmare has not ended – and to some extent, it will never end. In spite of their grief and agony, Reagan’s mother and father have chosen to channel their outrage into campaigning for changes in Ohio law that will prevent another family from the same experience. All Ohioans owe these parents an incredible debt of gratitude for the action path they have chosen as a way to honor the life and memory of their daughter Reagan.

Brian Golsby was and is a repeat violent felon. He was a known entity to the criminal justice system and his behavior while incarcerated continued to be problematic. Current law could not prevent his release even though he demonstrated no remorse or rehabilitation from his past life of crime. Upon his release from prison, he resumed his violent criminal behaviors as soon as he had the opportunity– before the night of February 9th.

The fact that Ohio law included an ankle bracelet for violent offenders released from prison was like a toothless tiger, inasmuch as there were no parameters set for an offender’s movements and there were no provisions to monitor and limit an offender’s movements in real time. Law enforcement had no way of knowing that there were indications that a violent parolee was on the loose and that he had resumed his criminal behavior, endangering public safety.

Although parole officers were assigned to supervise parolees (including Brian Golsby), their numbers in relationship to their case-loads and their training standards contributed to their failures to protect the community – particularly Reagan Tokes – from being victimized by the crime wave known as Brian Golsby.

We all know that Ohio’s prisons are full to overflowing and the costs are enormous. We all know that prison reforms are long overdue to reduce the number of non-violent inmates and move them into meaningful community corrections programs and rehabilitated lives. But at the same time we must not fail to strengthen Ohio laws to hold violent repeat felons responsible for the multiple crimes that they commit and stop the needless human tragedies that are happening to many Ohio families.

I urge committee members to support passage of Senate Bill 202 as soon as possible. The public’s safety is at stake. And the Tokes Family deserves to know that Ohio legislators respect and value the gift they are giving to Ohio by advocating for changes that will save other families from the same grief that befell them.

Thank you for consideration of our viewpoints.

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SB 202 Proponent Testimony 6-27-18