



Jim Hughes

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Sponsor Testimony

House Bill 96

Senate Judiciary Committee

April 10th, 2018

Chairman Bacon, Vice-Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Criminal Justice committee. Thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 96. This bill is a reintroduction of Senate Bill 316 from the 131st General Assembly. House Bill 96 received unanimous bipartisan support in the House of Representatives.

This legislation aims at addressing an issue that is happening with concerning frequency. According to prosecutors and law enforcement from across our state, Ohio citizens are being touched or groped against their will by offenders who repeat their egregious behavior over and over. In fact, there was a recent incident in Franklin County in which a serial offender who has a repeat pattern of targeting women in public places such as on COTA buses and would grope them. His vast criminal record of prior convictions of inappropriately touching women and serving time in jail did not deter him from committing the act again, as he groped another female at Grant Medical Center. This repeat offender just got out of jail five days prior to his recent attack for the same offense.

The offender has offended again since the legislation was initially introduced last year. He was wanted for questioning in relation to a fondling incident that occurred on Ohio State's campus. Just last fall, he grabbed a sexually assaulted a woman at Capital University library, and three hours later did the same thing at a bar near OSU's campus.

Local news affiliate WBNS10TV has reported on this suspect and his crimes several times in recent years. Security cameras caught him in the act at a Panera near OSU in 2013, and a library at Columbus State in 2015. He has been banned from riding

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COTA buses for doing the same thing: sitting next to a woman he doesn't know, and then sliding his hand between her backside and her seat. He has been arrested over 10 times for groping women in public. That is what spurred me to introduce House Bill 96.

These repeated patterns of unacceptable conduct have many asking why these offenders are only serving up to 6 months in jail for these crimes when they repeatedly recommit these horrendous acts over and over again. People are asking me why this law breaker isn't locked up for longer periods of time, especially since it appears that his short stints in jail are not teaching him that his behavior is not acceptable in society.

What House Bill 96 seeks to do is to ensure individuals, such as the one I described, receive longer jail sentences if they are repeat offenders. Currently, R.C. 2907.06 classifies sexual imposition as a misdemeanor of the third degree which carries a maximum 180-day jail sentence. What this proposal would do, if enacted into law, is specify that an individual who is charged with sexual imposition on their third conviction and any subsequent convictions (convicted or pleads guilty to) would be elevated to a misdemeanor of the first degree and would be eligible to receive a 365-day sentence each time they are convicted of these crimes. I want to point out that this proposal **does not** raise these crimes to a felony level—they will remain misdemeanors.

During committee, this bill was amended to include a provision that addresses the offense of disorderly conduct. The offense of disorderly conduct is generally a minor misdemeanor, but it is a fourth degree misdemeanor in certain aggravating circumstances. Under this bill, disorderly conduct that involves voluntary intoxication becomes a fourth degree misdemeanor, not only if any of the aggravating circumstances described in current law applies, but also when the offender previously has been convicted three or more times of that offense.

Protecting Ohio's citizens from unwanted and unprovoked touching or groping by repeat offenders should be a priority for all of us to ensure these offenders are off our streets and unable to attack innocent victims. Thank you for allowing me to testify on House Bill 96. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.