

House Bill 403
Proponent Testimony

Submitted to the Ohio House Criminal Justice Subcommittee

By: Reginald "Reggie" Wilkinson, Ed.D.

December 2020

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee; and members of the Ohio House Criminal Justice Subcommittee; I am Reggie Wilkinson, President of Connecting the Dots, LLC. **I served as Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction from 1991 until I retired in 2006.** I am a Past President of both the American Correctional Association and the Association of State Correctional Administrators. I currently serve on the Board of Trustees for The Ohio State University.

Today, I am testifying in support of the Transitional Control (TC) program and House Bill 403, sponsored by Representatives Hillyer and Galonski.

Nearly 50 years of experience working with individuals in the justice system has impressed upon me the critical need for rehabilitation services. **More than 95% of all prison inmates will return to the community.** Providing these individuals with evidence-informed programming that makes them less likely to reenter the justice system (recidivate) is the key to safer and stronger communities for all of us.

One effective tool offered to local jurisdictions by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) is the transitional control (TC) program as created under ORC 2967.26. This permits eligible inmates to be transferred to a community corrections (also known as halfway house) program for up to the final 180 days of their sentence under TC status. Administrative rules disqualify sex offenders, offenses of violence, excessive felony convictions, and those serving mandatory sentences from being eligible to participate in transitional control.

Data from a University of Cincinnati study has shown that the TC program is effective: individuals who complete the TC program have a 16% recidivism rate compared to the current 31% recidivism rate for all inmates released from ODRC.

Individuals whose participation in the TC program is vetoed by a judge remain in prison for the last 120-180 days of their sentence. Most are then released directly back into their local community, without the benefit of treatment services that support successful transition. As noted, they are more likely to return to prison compared to individuals who are able to participate in the TC program.

As an effective reentry program, TC should be available to as many eligible inmates as possible. Based on my experience, the decision whether or not to place an eligible inmate into the program should be an administrative decision made by ODRC. ODRC has current, firsthand experience from working with each potential TC

placement. In addition, ODRC staff are more experienced at assessing an inmate's risk to reoffend.

We need to reserve prison space for the most dangerous individuals. For the others, who will invariably be returning to our community, we must provide effective reentry and rehabilitation services to help them become productive citizens. We also owe it to the citizens of Ohio to provide services that contribute to the long-term safety of all our communities.

I support allowing ODRC to have the authority to make administrative transfers including to transitional control.

Thank you for your time. If you have questions, please contact me by email at rwilkinson.ctd@gmail.com or by phone at 614-562-0045.

Reginald A. Wilkinson, Ed.D.
President
Connecting the Dots, LLC
44 Buttles Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43215