



Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony on Senate Bill 3. I am the President and CEO of The Cornerstone of Recovery, Inc. with locations in Upper Arlington, Ohio and Louisville, Tennessee. Over the last 30 years, we have treated over 20,000 individuals with the disease of addiction. Through the years we have seen the devastation this disease has wreaked on individuals, families, and communities.

I applaud your efforts and support in reforming drug sentencing laws in Ohio as the increase of people in jail for drug offenses has exploded, not only in Ohio but across the nation. In fact, The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), along with many other institutions, states that most inmates are in prison because of substance abuse. According to NCADD, approximately 60% of individuals arrested test positive for illegal substances at the time of arrest. Nearly half of those incarcerated are clinically addicted, and 80% of all crime offenses stem from drug or alcohol abuse.

Many of those that commit crimes under the influence of drugs or alcohol have underlying problems that need to be addressed. We agree that justice has to be served for the crime committed, but are we doing justice to the individual or to society when we throw people in prison without addressing the underlying problem? Problems with addiction do not go away when one serves a jail term. The U.S. Justice Department claims that two-thirds of those in jail for drug related crimes will return to prison within three years of being released, therefore becoming repeat offenders. Of these, half are sent back to prison for failing a drug test while on probation or parole. When looking at the big picture, incarceration is expensive, and does not seem to change things for the better.

In a study published in *Crime & Delinquency*, researchers found that if just ten percent of offenders were treated in a drug treatment program instead of going to prison, the justice system would save \$4.8 billion. If forty percent received drug treatment, the total savings would be around \$12.9 billion. Gary Zarkin, Vice President of the Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Research Division at RTI International said, "Given the obvious burden on the criminal justice system and society caused by substance abuse within this population, diverting offenders to





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effective and targeted substance abuse treatment leads to less drug use, fewer crimes, and cost savings.”

Addiction is defined as a disease by most medical associations, including the American Medical Association and the American Society of Addiction Medicine. Like diabetes, cancer and heart disease, addiction is caused by a combination of behavioral, environmental and biological factors. Genetic risk factors account for about half of the likelihood that an individual will develop addiction.

The consequences of untreated addiction often include other physical and mental health disorders that require medical attention. If left untreated over time, addiction becomes more severe, disabling and life threatening. **Mandating drug treatment plans instead of the traditional jail sentence can change lives, improve society, and save billions.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve McGrew".

Steve McGrew
CEO/President
Cornerstone of Recovery

cc: Larry Toth

