



HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE – Proponent Testimony, House Bill 44, 6.13.23

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Hannah Kubbins and I am the Ohio Deputy Legislative Director for Americans for Prosperity (AFP). As one of the largest grassroots organizations in the country, AFP is driving long-term solutions to some of the country's biggest problems. Our organization, and its thousands of activists across Ohio, are dedicated to breaking barriers that stand in the way of people realizing their full potential and their version of the American dream. Removing or reducing these barriers, in whatever forms they take, helps move our society toward one of mutual benefit, where people succeed by helping others improve their lives and by transforming their communities. House bill 44, sponsored by Rep. Stewart and Rep. Humphrey, removes a barrier to government transparency by allowing for recording and preserving of parole board hearings for the purposes of preparing a transcript of the proceedings.

Ohio currently requires every municipal court-level eviction proceeding to be recorded and available for transcription. Further, in all court proceedings, there is a court reporter present to transcribe the proceedings or a recording is made. It should be common sense, then, that this requirement extends to parole board hearings. We believe transparency in this process will benefit all Ohioans regardless of their political affiliation or whether they've been impacted by the criminal justice system.

Since members of the public typically are not allowed to attend parole board hearings, HB 44 allows for more accountability and transparency in our increasingly complex legal system by allowing Ohio citizens to access the recordings and transcriptions through the Ohio Public Records Act.

HB 44 can benefit a victim's family by allowing them to access the transcript and/or recording and better understand why the Board came to a certain decision in the case of their loved one.

The 22,769 Ohioans that are subject to parole will be able to access the transcript and/or recording to know how the Board arrived at a decision about their release or continued incarceration.

HB 44 will also provide clarity to the public by illustrating how the Ohio Parole Board arrives at its decisions on whether to allow someone to reenter society. We believe by allowing members to “show their work” will also benefit members of the Board because transparency and accountability can lead to more trust in the system.

Americans for Prosperity will always support more governmental transparency at every level, including the criminal justice system. AFP Ohio and its thousands of activists across Ohio support this bill and urge a “yes” vote. Thank you for the opportunity to provide supportive testimony of HB 44 and to Reps. Stewart and Humphrey for re-introducing this important piece of legislation.