

Committees:

Civil Justice
Criminal Justice
Government Oversight
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Rules and Reference



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**Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz
The Ohio House of Representatives**

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Chair Abrams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 196. This legislation would enact common sense reforms to Ohio's probation system with the goal of saving taxpayer dollars by lowering incarceration rates through prioritizing rehabilitation over incarceration.

Currently, judges have broad sentencing discretion regarding community control. This means that the same charge in different counties can have vastly different consequences, such as some offenders finding themselves facing a much longer community control sentence than an offender of a similar crime in a different county. Additionally, technical violations, which are not difficult to commit, can further increase the amount of time an offender will have to stay on community control, causing far too many cases of taxpayers spending money to keep low-risk offenders on probation. Moreover, the longer someone is sentenced to community control, the higher the risk is that said person commits a technical violation, thereby increasing their time on community control or, worse, causing them to have to report to prison, needlessly burdening their rehabilitation process and their successful integration back into society. That is not an intelligent use of public funds, and that is not the reason community control was implemented. It is also worth mentioning that technical violations are essentially procedural; they are not crimes or willful non-compliance with a community control order.

To be clear, the objective of this legislation is not to diminish the use of community control. It is to provide better community control. Having someone on community control for 5 years and doing a poor job of supervising them, is going to lead to a worse outcome than having someone on community control for 1-3 years and tailoring the type of supervision to the inmate's risk profile. H.B. 196 makes useful and well-coordinated changes to the current limits on the allowable sentence length for community control and prescribes a maximum that offenders who commit a technical violation of their community control may be sentenced to. I should note that we have already conducted IP meetings and discussions with the Judicial Conference and the Probation Officers and a substitute bill reflecting the progress we have made through those

discussions should be used by the committee as the vehicle going forward. I will now turn it over to Representative Williams to discuss those specific changes.

