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S.B. 156
133rd General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Gavarone

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SUMMARY

- Enacts three prohibitions, under the new offense of “defrauding an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test,” that pertain to specified conduct intended to defraud such a test.
- Specifies that the offense and a related reporting requirement do not apply if the conduct involved urine or a urine additive and it was solely for the purpose of education or medical or scientific research.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Offense of “defrauding an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test”

Prohibitions

The bill enacts three prohibitions that pertain to conduct intended to defraud an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test. The prohibitions prohibit a person from knowingly doing any of the following:¹

1. Manufacturing, marketing, selling, distributing, using, or possessing “synthetic urine” or a “urine additive” (see “**Definitions**,” below, for definitions of the terms in quotation marks) to defraud an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test.
2. Using the person’s urine to defraud an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test if the person’s urine was expelled or withdrawn before collection of the urine specimen for the test.
3. Using the urine of another person to defraud an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test.

¹ R.C. 2925.15(B).

Penalty

Under the bill, a violation of any of the prohibitions described above is the offense of “defrauding an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test.” The offense generally is a second degree misdemeanor, but it is a first degree misdemeanor on a second or subsequent offense.²

Reporting requirement

The bill specifies that, except as prohibited by law, a person who collects urine specimens for alcohol, drug, or urine screening tests who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a person has used synthetic urine or a urine additive to defraud an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test in violation of the bill’s first prohibition described above, in paragraph (1) under “**Prohibitions**,” must report that knowledge or suspicion to law enforcement authorities. The bill does not provide any penalty or sanction for failing to report that knowledge or suspicion to law enforcement authorities in violation of the prohibition.³

Exemption

The bill provides that the bill’s prohibitions and reporting requirement described above do not apply if the manufacture, marketing, sale, distribution, use, or possession of the urine or urine additive is solely for the purpose of education or medical or scientific research.⁴

Prosecutions under the bill’s prohibitions or the offense of “tampering with evidence”

The bill specifies that, notwithstanding R.C. 1.51 (see the next paragraph), the prosecution of a person for a violation of any of the bill’s prohibitions described above does not preclude prosecution of that person under the offense of “tampering with evidence”⁵ (see “**Offense of “tampering with evidence,”**” below; also see **COMMENT**). An act that can be prosecuted under any of the bill’s prohibitions described above or under tampering with evidence may be prosecuted under the bill’s prohibition, under tampering with evidence, or under both the bill’s prohibition and tampering with evidence. However, if the charges are based on the same conduct and involve the same victim, the indictment or information may contain counts for all such offenses, but the person may be “convicted” of only one (see the second succeeding paragraph).⁶

Existing R.C. 1.51, unchanged by the bill, specifies that: (1) if a general provision conflicts with a special or local provision, they must be construed, if possible, so that effect is given to both, and (2) if the conflict between the provisions is irreconcilable, the special or local

² R.C. 2925.15(D).

³ R.C. 2925.15(E).

⁴ R.C. 2925.15(C).

⁵ R.C. 2921.12, not in the bill.

⁶ R.C. 2925.15(F).

provision prevails as an exception to the general provision, unless the general provision is the later adoption and the manifest intent is that the general provision prevail.⁷

Another existing provision, R.C. 2941.25, relates to R.C. 1.51. Under R.C. 2941.25, unchanged by the bill: (1) where the same conduct by a defendant can be construed to constitute two or more allied offenses of similar import, the indictment or information may contain counts for all such offenses, but the defendant may be “convicted” of only one, and (2) where a defendant’s conduct constitutes two or more offenses of dissimilar import, or where his or her conduct results in two or more offenses of the same or similar kind committed separately or with a separate animus as to each, the indictment or information may contain counts for all such offenses, and the defendant may be “convicted” of all of them.⁸ The Ohio Supreme Court has held that, as used in this section, a “conviction” consists of a guilty verdict and the imposition of a sentence or penalty.⁹ In all likelihood, this holding also would apply to the term “convicted” as used in the bill’s provision described in the second preceding paragraph.

Definitions

As used in the bill:¹⁰

“Synthetic urine” means any substance that is designed to simulate the composition, chemical properties, physical appearance, or physical properties of human urine for the purpose of defrauding an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test.

“Urine additive” means any substance that is designed to be added to human urine for the purpose of defrauding an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test.

Offense of “tampering with evidence”

Existing law, unchanged by the bill, prohibits a person, knowing that an official proceeding or investigation is in progress, or is about to be or likely to be instituted, from doing any of the following: (1) altering, destroying, concealing, or removing any record, document, or thing, with purpose to impair its value or availability as evidence in the proceeding or investigation, or (2) making, presenting, or using any record, document, or thing, knowing it to be false and with purpose to mislead a public official who is or may be engaged in the proceeding or investigation, or with purpose to corrupt the outcome of any such proceeding or investigation. A violation of the prohibition is the offense of “tampering with evidence,” a third degree felony.¹¹

⁷ R.C. 1.51, not in the bill.

⁸ R.C. 2941.25, not in the bill.

⁹ See, e.g., *State v. Rogers* (2015), 143 Ohio St.3d 385; *State v. Whitfield* (2010), 124 Ohio St.3d 319.

¹⁰ R.C. 2925.15(A).

¹¹ R.C. 2921.12, not in the bill.

As used in the prohibition, an “official proceeding” is any proceeding before a legislative, judicial, administrative, or other governmental agency or official authorized to take evidence under oath, and includes any proceeding before a referee, hearing examiner, commissioner, notary, or other person taking testimony or a deposition in connection with an official proceeding.¹²

COMMENT

Another existing offense (“obstructing official business”), unchanged by the bill, also might overlap, in certain circumstances, the bill’s new prohibitions. The prohibition under that offense prohibits a person, without privilege to do so and with purpose to prevent, obstruct, or delay the performance by a public official of any authorized act within the official’s official capacity, from doing any act that hampers or impedes a public official in the performance of the official’s lawful duties. The offense generally is a second degree misdemeanor, but it is a fifth degree felony if the violation creates a risk of physical harm to any person.¹³ As used in the offense, a “public official” is any elected or appointed officer, or employee, or agent of the state or any political subdivision, whether in a temporary or permanent capacity, including, but not limited to, legislators, judges, and law enforcement officers; it does not include any JobsOhio personnel.¹⁴

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	05-28-19

S0156-I-133/ec

¹² R.C. 2921.01, not in the bill.

¹³ R.C. 2921.31, not in the bill.

¹⁴ R.C. 2921.01, not in the bill.