



Natasha Watts
Owner, Natasha Watts Bail Bonds
Testimony before Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee
Substitute House Bill 439
Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Good afternoon Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and members of the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee. My name is Natasha Watts and I own a bail bond business in Cleveland. I am here to testify in opposition to Substitute House Bill 439.

My business has been in operation for 16 years. Like my fellow bondswomen and men here today, I take a lot of pride in the work I do to catch the “bad guys” who run from their court appearances. My work is more than just a job, it’s my life – and I’ve dedicated that life to ensuring justice is done here in Ohio.

House Bill 439 is not a way to ensure justice is served in Ohio. It’s a distraction from real reform, undermines our justice system and puts victims of crime at unnecessary risk.

I am also very concerned at the message this legislation sends to at-risk youth. I have an organization called CHIPS – Children of Incarcerated Parents – where we work hard to build relationships with parents and their children while the parents are imprisoned. We help these families build and maintain a relationship by providing supportive programming, transportation and family activities.

Having worked with at-risk youth, I can see how this legislation will serve as a disincentive to youth – when they see how this law would allow them to walk away without any consequences with just a slap on the wrist and no accountability.

In my work, we support the hard work of law enforcement officials and work closely with the court to ensure we bring defendants to court – that is the function of bail. Without an effective bail system – that is supported by bail bond agents like myself and my colleagues – these accused criminals are going to walk away with no fear of ever being brought back in.

I am strongly opposed to this legislation. In my work both as a bond agent and as a volunteer with at-risk youth, I know what this will mean for Ohio – more criminals on the street to commit more crimes, making more work for our already over-worked law enforcement.

Thank you for your time, and I’d be please to answer any questions.