



Office of State Representative Stephanie Howse
House District II

Sponsor Testimony Ohio House Bill 645
Human Impact Statement

Good Afternoon Chair Manning, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Celebrezze and members of the Criminal Justice Committee. I want to thank you all for allowing me to give my sponsor testimony on House Bill 645- Human Impact Statement for criminal justice bills.

This bill will help assess the human impact that future legislation will have on our criminal justice system. In the same way a fiscal analysis breaks down the costs associated with development policies and projects, such an analysis will create a systematic examination on how the policies we create may affect different racial and ethnic groups. Through this bill, any change to the criminal justice system (such as increased sentencing or criminal prohibition) will undergo a thorough LSC study to determine what areas of the population will be affected by the proposed changes to criminal justice laws.

In Ohio and across the country, African Americans and other minority groups are disproportionately overrepresented in the criminal justice process and in prison populations. Joining such states as Connecticut, Oregon, and Iowa, which have similar existing legislation, Ohio will be among the first in a growing trend of states that are adopting much needed human impact statements.

According to fiscal impact statements, between 1980 and 2015, the number of people incarcerated in America increased from roughly 500,000 to over 2.2 million. One in every thirty-seven adults in the United States, or 2.7% of the adult population, is under some form of correctional supervision. African Americans are incarcerated at more than 5 times the rate of whites. One in three black men born in 2001 can expect to go to prison in their lifetime. If African Americans and Hispanics were incarcerated at the same rates as whites, prison and jail populations would decline by almost 40%. Spending on prisons and jails has increased at triple the rate of spending on PRE-K -12 public education in the last thirty years. The Associated Press found that bills with impact evaluations that predicted neutral or projected reductions in

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disparities were generally more likely to pass than bills with impact statements suggesting disparate outcomes.

This legislation is needed because it can help Ohio to curb or minimize adverse consequences on the criminal justice system as well as a variety of other contexts. When racial equity is not consciously known and/or addressed, such incomprehension may unwittingly entrench racial inequality in our legislation and perpetuate it for future generations. As a result, human impact statements are important for criminal justice systems because it is exceedingly difficult to reverse sentencing policies once they have been adopted. Without having been analyzed for human impact, many of our current policies reflect this disparity and exacerbate existing problems in our communities. I want to emphasize that human behavior has no color and the traits vary from person to person. It is not fair or just to identify a certain type of behavior with an ethnic background.

Furthermore, we as legislators want to prevent the waste of taxpayer dollars. Mirroring the state budgeting process will positively impact the people we are committed to serving daily. Having a Human Impact Analysis attached to proposed policy will be a start towards addressing the serious issue Ohio is faced with. In our large and diverse state, it is important that we as legislators keep the pluralistic nature of our constituency in mind; as such, we must remember that "one size does not fit all" when it comes to criminal justice policy. It is imperative for the next generation of Ohioans that we assess who will be disproportionately affected by proposed laws before we pass them.

I would like to thank the committee for listening to my testimony this afternoon. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.

<https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>

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