

Sean P. Ruffin  
1756 Meadowlawn Drive  
Columbus, Ohio 43219  
[spruffin@gmail.com](mailto:spruffin@gmail.com)  
216.324.1332

May it please this Honorable Body, Senate President Larry Obhof, Committee Chairman Dave Burke for the opportunity to offer testimony on this timely issue. I especially want to thank sponsors, Senators Hercul Craig and Sandra Williams, for their vision in putting forth this propitious legislation.

I am Sean P. Ruffin. I am a lawyer educated at the school up North. And, to be clear, a couple of blocks North. I am also a son, a brother, as well as a father. I, too, am George Floyd, Ahmaud Arber, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, John Crawford, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland. I could go on, literally, for hours. These names are all African American humans, but do not be misled, it now has a more direct impact on our European American brothers and sisters. The economic impact of judicial resources, disproportionately charged criminal offenses, harsher and longer sentences mean we all pay. Branding citizens with felonies presents a hurdle to employment that can often lead to recidivism which puts everyone at risk.

Racism has always been an economic construct. Slavery was instituted to obtain and receive free labor. And now, over a century after the institution of slavery, we all still dealing with the ravages of this country's original sin. Slavery is still enshined in our Constitution And, beneficiaries of the institution continue to hold onto the fruits of the same. They hold onto the vestiges of racism, injustice and inequality as if they are holding on for dear life. But, the world is changing, in my opinion, for the better, as political subdivisions, such as Franklin County and the City of Columbus and the Ohio State, along with corporations such as the NCAA and Nike and many others are stepping up in ways that we have heretofore never seen.

This august body can either take the lead and be remembered by history as a first or sit idly by on the sidelines and watch the world change around it. The one thing about which we can be assured is change. From Slavery to Reconstruction to Civil Rights, change is certain. We are at another pivotal point in this State and this Country's history. And you stand at the crossroads.

Where does Ohio stand, today? Many, if not all, of you became public servants for the same reason I went to law school. That is, to leave the world a better place than when we came into it. I urge you, and am likewise inspired and optimistic, to lead the world in declaring racism as a public health crisis. As I write this testimony, on Father's Day, I think about the change that has occurred in this country and in the State of Ohio from my father's generation to that of my son's and daughters'. On behalf of my children, Jordan, Shawna and Seante' and your progeny, too, I am both humbled to offer this testimony and thankful to this honorable body for taking up this issue. I also thank you for, what i expect, moving the needle on this issue of racism and assuring that you, as individuals, and as a collective, will go down as trailblazers in the annals of history.