

Good afternoon, my name is Anthony Parker, I'm a 2nd year at Ohio State and I'm testifying in favor of HCR25. I first met Ronald Hummons last October during his hunger strike at the Ohio Statehouse, where Yusuf Salaam of the Exonerated 5 spoke on behalf of this movement. Fast forward to today and I am proud to stand here with Ron after our months of work on moving this resolution forward.

I cannot stress enough how important it is that the Ohio General Assembly pass this resolution. As someone who benefits from the systemic and institutionalized racism in this country, I am here to say that there is a desperate need for state lawmakers across the country to recognize the historical repression of trauma on low income, marginalized people. We need to seriously think about the effects of 400 years perpetuated on one community. When I think about that, I think about how my house in Canton, Ohio is part of a historic, predominantly white neighborhood that was built for wealthy property owners, bankers and lawyers, many of whom had servants, during the 1920s. This trend of prioritizing development for investors instead of community development continues today in my city. Needless to say, the kids in my neighborhood grew up with ample resources to aid them through life. But the kids who lived down the street from my neighborhood in low income housing, did not.

My representative Thomas West was absolutely correct in saying that children, especially children in communities of color, are suffering; in their neighborhoods, schools, homes, because of the trauma that surrounds them. Children are born into a system where their success is determined by their zip code, and if you don't win the birth lottery like I did, you are prone to experience violence, neglect, hunger, housing insecurity, abuse and other serious trauma in your early years. Just this year, an 11 year old boy shot and killed a 6 year old boy in my hometown. Nothing about this is normal, and the thought of children being exposed to and partaking in violence on a daily basis, should send chills down your spine, NOT have you thinking that these are bad kids who were raised by bad criminals. Horrifying, sobering stories like this are a chilling reminder of the behavior that trauma perpetuates in our communities.

Unfortunately, our communities are not well prepared to deal with this trauma. Beyond the lack of material investment exists the racist stigma that "bad" children are in need of punishment. Instead we need to realize that traumatized children need help. Every year, my high school prioritized "cracking down" on bad behavior, rather than addressing its root cause.

Students racked up disciplinary charges and suspensions to the point where it prevented them from graduating.

During my time at school, they increased security guard and police presence rather than increasing the presence of school psychologists and social workers. This is but one example of the many ways trauma is forced onto our youth. If we continue to take a punitive stance on children who are in desperate need of mental health support, the future of our communities will be very, very bleak.

It is time we put a stop to the endless cycle of generational trauma. While declaring a state of emergency won't solve everything, it is a necessary step that will set Ohio on track to deal with its trauma crisis. Thank you.