



Sarah Inskeep
Opponent Testimony for House Bill 22
Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee
Thursday, June 24, 2021

Chairman LaRe, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony in opposition to House Bill 22, one of the four pending anti-protest bills in the Ohio legislature. Had it not been for the extremely late committee notice for this hearing, I would deliver this testimony in-person as I'm sure countless other Ohioans would if they were provided an appropriate notice.

My name is Sarah Inskeep, and I am the Ohio Policy and Movement Building Director for URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity. As an organization committed to Reproductive Justice for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and AAPI communities; LGBTQIA+ individuals; young people; and people with low incomes, over 25,000 of which are in Ohio, I urge this committee to vote no and ultimately stop House Bill 22.

As a multistate organization building a young people's movement for Reproductive Justice, URGE centers the leadership of young people of color and queer, trans, and nonbinary individuals. We transform culture and build power where the challenges and opportunities are greatest, particularly in the South and Midwest. This includes our work in Ohio, where the extremist supermajority in the statehouse continues to prioritize abortion bans, bills that will inflict more state violence on marginalized communities, restrict our right to vote, and recklessly use precious state resources to fund religiously affiliated organizations that will further advance their harmful ideological war instead of feeding hungry Ohioans or adequately funding public schools in the poorest counties in the state.

Make no mistake – this wave of anti-protest legislation is in direct response to the historic year of activism and protesting that was ignited by the murder of George Floyd, Casey Goodson Jr., Andre Hill, Ma'Khia Bryant, and many more Black lives lost to state violence and police brutality. The sponsors and supporters of these bills, including House Bill 22, made it clear in their testimonies that they want to further protect the law enforcement, silence protesters, and attempt to stop a growing grassroots movement calling for the divestment from the police, accountability, and investment in Black communities.

What the supporters of this legislation failed to mention was any incidents or reports of police concealing their badge numbers, failing to activate their body cameras, rapidly deploying escalation tactics including use of chemical agents and other munitions without warning, and using excessive force on non-violent crowds, resulting in lawsuits and internal investigations. For example, in Columbus three police officers were recently charged with assault, dereliction of duty, and interference of civil rights.¹ In April, Columbus City Council shared that the contract



with the BakerHostetler law firm had already exceeded \$650,000.ⁱⁱ In May, the City of Columbus announced the ten-million-dollar settlement with Andre Hill's family.ⁱⁱⁱ In the City of Columbus alone, tens of millions of dollars that could have for probes and payouts for murders when they could be directly invested into Black communities across the city.

Rather than doubling down and providing more protection and authority to law enforcement and their often violent and unchecked ways, Ohioans, queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (QTBIPOC) who are among the primary targets state violence and police brutality have made their calls to elected officials clear: Divest from the police and deeply invest in community-based safety programs, housing, health care, education, and more. House Bill 22 is the opposite of this constituent call to action. While much of the bill is duplicative in its attempt to criminalize activity that is already illegal under Ohio Revised Code, it will likely result in more innocent Ohioans being arrested and charged because of the provisions to expand obstruction of justice to include indirect actions and the criminalization of failing to follow a lawful order. Increased interaction with the police will result in more violence and death of QTBIPOC individuals in our state.

People organizing and coming together to exercise their First Amendment Right has been instrumental in spurring historic changes in our society, including recent sweeping changes to police oversight, funding, and accountability seen across the country. This is just the beginning, and the people of the streets will not be silenced nor will our grassroots movement be stifled by anti-protest legislative efforts such as House Bill 22. I urge a no vote on this reactionary and racist bill and am available to answer any questions or concerns from the committee via email or phone.

ⁱ The Columbus Dispatch, *What We Know About Charges Against Three Columbus Police Officers From Protests*, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/crime/2021/06/09/three-columbus-police-officers-charged-actions-during-protests/7620174002/>. Published June 9, 2021.

ⁱⁱ The Columbus Dispatch, *Cost of Probe into Alleged Columbus Police Misconduct During Protests Now More Than \$615,000*, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/local/2021/04/09/cost-investigation-into-allegations-columbus-police-misconduct-during-2020-protests-tops-615-k/7156377002/>. Published April 9, 2021.

ⁱⁱⁱ NPR, *The City of Columbus To Pay \$10 Million in Settlement With Family of Andre Hill*, <https://www.npr.org/2021/05/14/996979538/city-of-columbus-to-pay-10-million-in-settlement-with-family-of-andre-hill>. Published May 14, 2021.