



Jaime Miracle  
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House Bill 22 Opponent Testimony  
House Criminal Justice Committee  
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Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, my name is Jaime Miracle and I am the Deputy Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio. I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of our more than 50,000 members and activists against House Bill 22, an unacceptable attack on the right to protest for Ohioans.

Central to the American identity is protest. Protests have made our country what it is today. The Boston Tea Party, the Silent Sentinels fighting for voting rights at the White House, the Civil Rights Movement, the Stonewall Riots that began the modern LGBTQ rights movement, and so many other protest movements all contributed to the advances we have seen around individual rights and liberty in this nation. Unfortunately, the goals of many of those movements have not yet seen complete fulfillment. Over the last year we have seen individuals across our state, nation, and the world return to the streets with renewed calls for equality and justice for ALL — not just some — in our society.

As is true with most protest movements, backlash is swift and multidimensional. From overzealous police responses, teargassing, and shooting wooden bullets at peaceful protesters, to bills like House Bill 22 and the multiple other anti-protests bills being introduced and debated in this legislative body, institutions come together to try to intimidate and silence the voices of the people.

Just last month, in a case around police misconduct in Columbus during last summer's racial justice protests, a judge ruled that Columbus Police could no longer use teargas and rubber bullets against peaceful protesters. In his ruling, Judge Algenon L. Marbley of the Southern District of Ohio described the conduct of law enforcement during the protests as "the sad tale of officers clothed with the awesome power of the state, run amok." Now with House Bill 22, this legislature is giving more power to law enforcement, more support from the "awesome power of the state" to abuse their power when dealing with peaceful protests in our cities.

The sponsors of this bill say that this bill is about keeping the public safe, but if you look at the evidence around us, this bill will do the opposite. Instead of doubling down on racist practices that encourage abuse by police officers, this legislature should be looking at real solutions to the problems of over-policing and police violence in our communities, especially in communities of color.

Ohioans need and deserve new ways of thinking around community safety, not the same tired tropes like House Bill 22. The racist practices of our nation's past do not keep communities safe, and doubling down on these practices will make communities even less safe than they already are. It is shameful that the sponsors of House Bill 22 and the other anti-protest bills in the Ohio General Assembly are so deaf to the messages from the last year of protests for racial justice—who I would point out are also your constituents, the people who were elected to represent and serve. Instead of hearing the cries of protesters, this bill turns a deaf ear to their demands. This bill shows just how much the majority in this legislature does not hear the pleas that Black Lives Matter and do not hear the cries of family members who lost their loved one to police violence.

NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio strongly encourages a no vote on House Bill 22. We urge this legislature to pass community driven policies that actually make our neighborhoods safer and that address the racism at the root of so many of these issues.