



House Criminal Justice Committee  
Proponent Testimony  
Ohio House Bill 183  
Written Testimony Only

Allison Reynolds-Berry, MSW

November 16, 2021

Dear Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

My name is Allison Reynolds-Berry and I am a resident of Cincinnati and the Executive Director of the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC). Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio House Bill 183.

In 2017, on a cool fall morning, I walked into Chillicothe Correctional Institute for the first time and sat down across from a man who has been on death row since I was one month old. Shivering from the cold and out of nervousness, I listened for hours as he shared his story with me – growing up in an abusive home where he witnessed regular abuse of his mother by his father and experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse throughout his childhood. Childhood trauma like this is prevalent in a majority of cases of individuals on death row. In 2015, a survey by the *Texas Observer* “found that 22 of the 41 death row prisoners who responded (54%) volunteered having experienced ‘violent or abusive’ childhoods.” They were raised in one failed system and they’re sent to die in another.

Catholic sisters, and members of IJPC have stood in prayerful witness outside Lucasville Correctional for every execution, or attempted execution, since 1999. Each time, as I watch the hearse go by and turn left into the parking lot, I know I am responsible for the death. Just as each of you is responsible.

We can never bring back the lives that have been lost to violence, but we do not need to add to the loss of life by taking another. Especially when we know there have been 11 innocent people exonerated from death row, and there are still people on death row who are likely innocent (Anthony Apanovitch, Elwood Jones, and Tyrone Noling). Killing an innocent person is not a risk we should be willing to take.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote yes on this critically important bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

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