

House Criminal Justice Committee
Opponent Testimony
House Joint Resolution 2
Written Testimony Only

Robert Seaton-Todd
April 5, 2022

Dear Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee,

My name is Robert Seaton-Todd and I live in Mentor, Ohio. I have worked for many years as a physicist for the government and now own two businesses in Lake and Cuyahoga Counties. I have profound care for the safety, unity, and health of Ohio communities. I thank you for the opportunity to present testimony **opposing House Joint Resolution 2**.

I oppose HJR 2 because it is a wasteful, misguided, and improper use of Ohio's cash bail system.

The Ohio legislature already has widely supported, comprehensive bail bills (HB 315 / SB 182) in front of it that empower judges to emphasize public safety when determining pretrial conditions. The committee should focus resources on moving HB 315 forward.

Additionally, as the Ohio Supreme Court reminded us in its recent decision, cash bail is meant solely to encourage reappearances in court; cash bail has never been meant to force impoverished people to jail, nor has it ever been meant to detain an individual who poses a danger to others. The bail system proposed in HB 315 exhaustively protects against wealth-based detention while also providing several paths for judges to explore when considering how to expand both fairness and public safety.

HJR 2, on the other hand, doubles down on the Draconian and violent wealth-based system of pretrial detention. HJR 2 would release arrested individuals based on how much money they have, not because they pose a threat. This is dangerous and misguided.

So many innocent lives in Ohio have already been destroyed by cash bail. It's time we bring in a new era where wealth does not determine whether a person must sit in jail. It's time we empower judges to look at the facts of a case and contextually determine the necessary and fair conditions of release or detention that will protect against harm, uphold justice, and keep Ohioans from needlessly languishing in jail.

Please vote no on HJR 2 and instead move forward with the already existing meaningful HB 315 which empowers courts to use safe, contextual, and fair tools that actually protect the community from violence and disruption. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Robert Seaton-Todd