

House Criminal Justice Committee

Opponent Testimony

House Joint Resolution 2

Written Testimony Only from Elizabeth A. Hostetler

April 6, 2022 HCJ Committee Hearing

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

My name is Elizabeth A. Hostetler from Bluffton, Ohio in Allen County. I am a retired public school educator, and Emeritus faculty member and founder of The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center at Bluffton University. As an advocate for peace and justice, I take seriously the right to fairness and equity for all citizens, including reform in our justice system. Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony **opposing House Joint Resolution 2**.

I oppose HJR 2 because it doubles down on the failed status quo rather than meeting Ohioans' needs. I also oppose these changes because:

- I oppose wealth-based detention. On any given day, there are as many as 12,000 legally innocent people held in Ohio's jails, many of whom are locked up because they cannot afford the cash bail amount set in their case.
- I am concerned about public safety because currently people are released based on how much money they have, not because they pose a threat.
- I am troubled by the significant racial disparities that have been identified in cash bail setting practices.
- I find it faulty reasoning to use my tax dollars to keep people in jail because they can't pay the cash bail, not because they are a threat to society.

To me, "public safety" should not be used as a weapon to promote fear among our citizens, as is presently practiced by those who are promoting HJR2 and HB607. In addition, HJR 2, HB 607 & SJR 5 perpetuate the false idea that cash bail keeps any of us safe. Preserving the current system & then making it worse is not the path to true bail reform.

Genuine attempts to make the public safe is possible when meaningful, well-thought-out comprehensive bail reform legislation is passed, such as what is presently before the OGA—HB315 (with an updated SB182 being presented on April 5). The bipartisan House Bill 315 and SB182 make our communities safer by giving courts and prosecutors tools to protect public safety while at the same time ending the wealth-based detention that harms so many of our neighbors. Ohioans want fairness in do not want or need HJR 2, and I urge you to VOTE NO if given the opportunity to vote on it.

To be clear, HJR2, HB607 and SJR5 appears to be much more about politics than policy. Bail reform has become a political wedge issue for some in an election year (not just in Ohio). Justice DeWine has been very outspoken about the Ohio SC decision mentioned. Attorney General Yost is helping direct and promote this overall effort. At least some officials certainly see having this on the November ballot as a good way to get some of their voters to the polls. HJR 2, HB 607 & SJR 5 are all unnecessary and

counterproductive. As noted already, the OGA currently has two strong, well thought out bail reform bills (again, SB 182 & HB 315) before them for consideration. Those very comprehensive and necessary bills properly balance public safety considerations with regard to bail.

If the debate and effort was simply about policy, they could at least have approached the sponsors of SB 182 & HB 315, the bipartisan bail reform bills, to discuss this issue. But they did not and the introductions of HJR 2, HB 607 & SJR 5 took many by surprise.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this opponent testimony.

Elizabeth A. Hostetler

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