



The Reverend Terry D. Williams of Orchard Hill United Church of Christ in Chillicothe, Ohio

Testimony for March 1, 2022 – Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing on SB288

Chairman Manning, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and other distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony for the Good Samaritan provisions of SB 288, as well as offering 3 additional amendments.

My name is The Reverend Terry Williams. I am an Ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, and I currently serve as Lead Pastor of Orchard Hill United Church of Christ in Chillicothe. As a Christian pastor, I am called to ministries of preaching, spiritual care, faith formation, and teaching within my local congregation.

As a clergyperson who has ministered for nearly a decade on the front lines of the opioid epidemic in Appalachian southern Ohio, I know firsthand what terror comes when a person fails to intervene to save someone else's life. Countless times I have witnessed serious traumas and deaths of people within my community whose lives could have been spared if the individuals around them at the time of their greatest need had been empowered by state policy that put a higher premium on saving life than on punishing people who use drugs.

Many times I have sat with grieving families of persons killed by overdoses. Many times I have held their anger and rage as they lamented the death of their loved ones. And all too often, those who are left to mourn grieve most deeply one thing: that no one was there to hold the deceased as they died.

No one to hold that brother. No one to hold that sister. No one to hold that child — that beloved human who was made in the likeness and the image of God.

As deeply felt as that sadness is also the gnawing reality that not only could someone have been there to hold those dying children of God, but quite likely there could have been someone there to keep them from dying at all — a reality that could be possible if Ohio only had the foresight to pass a Good Samaritan Law.

No one should have to mourn the death of their loved one and wonder whether our state's policies could have prevented their death. No one should have to grieve the absence of a family member because we as the good people of Ohio couldn't make very basic, evidence-based changes to our laws. No one should have to bury another Ohioan because we lack a strong Good Samaritan Law.

I strongly support the Good Samaritan provisions of SB288 that are before you today, as well as some commonsense amendments that would greatly strengthen the bill. Namely, I ask that the bill be amended to remove restrictions for those on community control or post release-control, to remove limitations on how many times an individual can receive the immunity outlined in the bill, and to remove treatment assessment requirements that are burdensome on local government resources and often unnecessary for public health.

You have the opportunity today to save many lives in my community by passing this essential Good Samaritan legislation and making sure it is as strong as it can be for the people of Ohio.

Please do right by Ohio's families – please **vote YES on SB288 with commonsense amendments.**

Sincerely,

Rev. Terry Williams
105 N. Courtland Drive
Chillicothe, OH 45601
614.477.9317