

House Finance Committee
Proponent Testimony
House Bill 259
Written Testimony Only

Allison Reynolds-Berry

10/10/2023

Dear Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Allison Reynolds-Berry, Executive Director at Ignite Peace, formerly the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC) in Cincinnati. Thank you for this opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio House Bill 259. Ignite Peace supports House Bill 259 and ending the arbitrary death penalty system. Since our inception, nearly 38 years ago, Ignite Peace has been advocating against the death penalty and grounding that work in establishing relationships with people on death row and their families. We have had a presence at the 56 executions our state has carried out since the death penalty was reinstated.

Not only is the death penalty a violation of basic human rights, but it operates within a broken system that is impossible to fix. For every five people Ohio has executed, one has been exonerated. Through relationships with death row exonerees like Derrick Jamison and wrongfully convicted Elwood Jones, we have witnessed first hand the toll of wrongful conviction and a system that cannot be repaired. Additionally, research from our study on the cost analysis of the death penalty in Hamilton County shows that receiving the death penalty is highly dependent on your geography, your race, and the race of the victim. People of Color make up less than 15% of Ohio's population but they represent 56% of Ohio's death row. When Ohio executions have taken place, 75% of the time the crime has involved a white victim when 50% of murder victims are black. Hamilton County, where we are located, has executed more people in Ohio than any other county. Only ten out of Ohio's 88 counties consistently use the death penalty.

It has been five years since the last execution in Ohio. There should never be another execution. I ask you to consider this testimony on behalf of Ignite and vote this critically important bill out of committee. Thank you again for the opportunity.

Allison Reynolds-Berry
Executive Director