

HB 230
Opponent Testimony
Billy Golden
October 23, 2023

Dear Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer opponent testimony for House Bill 230.

My name is Billy Golden. I strongly oppose HB 230 and the creation of mandatory five-year prison sentences for people who sell drugs found to be responsible for a fentanyl-related overdose death as well as boosting penalties for drug trafficking charges for cocaine, fentanyl-related compounds, heroin and methamphetamine. As a person that has been part of the harm reduction community for years, I know that sentencing for drug related felonies does not save lives.

Having the privilege of working in harm reduction and with people in chaotic substance use, I have seen firsthand that when people are given access to tools that help ensure they have stable housing, healthcare, financial resources, and support for their mental and physical health, people make positive changes for themselves that benefit their community as well. I have also seen the real harms of jail and prison as factors that continue to harm communities and individuals alike. I have known many people that have overdosed, some have died and some have survived. Nobody has ever said they feel like their chances of overdosing would be decreased if people who sell drugs received harsher penalties.

While well-intentioned, this bill continues to amplify the myth that overdose deaths can be prevented by harsher penalties. There is no empirical evidence that Drug Induced Homicide prosecutions save lives. Ohio, being third in the country for Drug Induced Homicide prosecutions ([Drug Induced Homicide as a Response to Overdose | Health in Justice Action Lab](#)) is also fifth in the country for overdose fatalities ([Drug Overdose Mortality by State \(cdc.gov\)](#)) – DIH has not prevented overdose. Better solutions include increased funding for public health interventions, including harm reduction, wraparound support services for people who use drugs and increased funding for Housing First programs, and lastly, addressing damages of drug war policies such as second chance employment, increased legal aid services, and increased support to small community-based organizations.

Again, I strongly oppose HB 230. I urge you to not move this legislation forward and I thank you for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,

Billy Golden
Billy.cincyep@gmail.com
513-702-5581