

Senate Judiciary Committee
Senate Bill 101
Written Testimony Only

Testimony of Daniela Jauk-Ajamie Ph.D. (Assistant Professor, University of Akron)

November 11, 2023

Dear Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

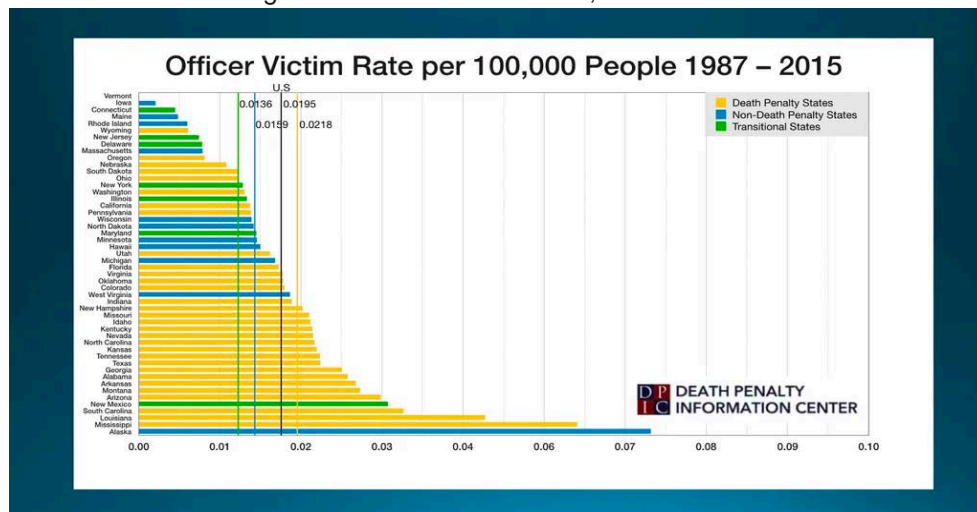
My name is Daniela Jauk-Ajamie and I am a resident of Summit County. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 101.

As scholar of criminal justice and citizens of Ohio, I am submitting testimony in **opposition to using the deterrence theory and scholarship to justify the death penalty** in Ohio. A fundamental premise of deterrence theory is that the threat of sanctions can effectively discourage criminal offending. To date, research showing that the death penalty discourages crime is at best inconclusive and fraught with methodological issues.

- Given the lack of consensual evidence, the National Research Council (NRC) suggests that a **debate about the death penalty as a deterrent should be removed from any policy discussion**, and not be based on existing research (NRC 2012). Research overwhelmingly shows that methodologies are underdeveloped (Zimring et al 2009, NRC 2012, Oliphant 2022) and results are inconclusive and contradictory (Capaldi 2023, NRC 2012, Donohue and Wolfers 2009), with one exception:
- There is a clear consensus that there is **no deterrence effect of the death penalty when it comes to the crime of murder** (Donohue and Wolfers 2009, Kovandzic and Boots 2009), even when measured with advanced statistical methods across states (Brett 2021, Oliphant 2022). Zimring et al (2009) debunked the deterrence effect with a unique comparative test of Hong Kong (abolished death penalty) and Singapore (high level of executions) in looking at homicide rates over time and through legislation changes: Homicide levels and trends are remarkably similar in these two cities over the 35 years.
- In fact, there is a **correlation between the use of the death penalty and increased murder rates**: The murder rate in non-death penalty states has remained consistently lower than the rate in states with the death penalty, and the gap has grown since 1990 (DPIC 2023a).

- An analysis of U.S. murder data from 1987 through 2015 has found **no evidence that the death penalty deters murder or protects police** (DPIC 2023b). On the contrary, police fatalities are highest in death penalty states (see figure 1). A national poll of 500 randomly selected police chiefs puts capital punishment at the bottom of their priority list. Law enforcement responses suggest that the abolition of the death penalty might improve law enforcement-community relationships, and resources spent on lengthy death penalty trials and detentions could be better spent on other priorities, such as police officers, crime prevention, victim assistance, or community policing (Dieter 2009).
- Last but not least, as scholars we embrace and emphasize the resolution of our largest professional organization in the field. The *American Society of Criminology* “condemns this form of punishment, and urges its members to use their professional skills in legislatures and courts to **seek a speedy abolition of this form of punishment**” due to a lack of evidence of its effectiveness (ASC 1989). Similarly, *the American Bar Association, the American Law Institute, and the American Psychological Association* are among the many national and international academic associations that call for the abolition of the death penalty (Waldo and Myers 2019).

Figure 1. Officer Victim Rates, DPIC 2023b.



I ask you to consider my testimony and vote yes on this critically important bill.
Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,
Daniela Jauk-Ajamie, Ph.D.

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