

To: Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
Fr: Jonathan Mann
Re: Interested Party testimony, SB 101

November 13, 2024

Good morning, Chairman Manning, ranking member Hicks-Hudson, and committee members; my name is Jonathan Mann. My father, John, was murdered in 2017. I believe in the death penalty before he was killed. I thought capital punishment was a useful deterrent, cost-effective, and expeditious. Over two years, I began learning facts about the death penalty in the US and Ohio from the Death Penalty Information Center, the foremost unbiased information collector surrounding capital punishment. While learning new information about the death penalty, my family was going through the judicial process. That hellish experience, coupled with the information I'd learned researching, has led to grave concerns surrounding the efficacy of the death penalty.

In an April article on the Death Penalty Information Center titled: "Ohio's Attorney General's Report Describes Death Penalty as "Enormously Expensive" and "Broken," referencing the annual Capital Crimes Report, Attorney General Dave Yost said, "At a time when faith in society's institutions is at an all-time low, the failure of the capital-punishment system could be Exhibit A ."David Yost, or Attorney General and potentially our next Governor, has repeatedly said the system is broken, and we need to believe

Executive Director of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association Lou Tobin, in his HB 183 in 2021, Mr. Tobin said: "Our Association is strongly opposed to abolishing the death penalty because we believe that the death penalty is an appropriate punishment for the worst offenders. The discussions of repeal aren't driven by public safety and the demands of justice in mind". As a family member of a murder victim, I'm disgusted and appalled by the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association's repeated use of some version of the phrase: worst of the worst. All murder is horrible, and for anyone to use this phrase is reprehensible. Can you imagine yourself standing in a room of family members of murder victims, going down the line, and letting them know their loved one's murder was not quite heinous enough? This actuarial style verbiage determining the value of human life is utterly grotesque. Beyond that statement, those listening, please keep in mind that family members of victims don't have access to support resources unless there is a legal case with an FBI estimate of a national homicide close rate of 61%. With 148 murders in Columbus last year, and 152 in Cleveland, 117 families this year won't have access to resources.

Family members of murder victims need change. We already have gone through hell, losing our loved ones and then fighting the system for any help. Many of us are drummed out of the funnel of support without a case. Those of us who are lucky get told justice will be served. Chasing a death sentence that won't be carried out isn't justice; it's a misuse of resources.

While all family members of victims may not all agree on how we move forward, we all agree that the system is failing all of us and justice isn't being achieved. Our state's resources are finite, and the death penalty hasn't made our communities safer, nor are we focusing on the impacted innocent people associated with these cases. Change has to happen here, folks. We have 40 years of data to show we're spending much money on a failing process instead of helping the innocent heal.

I'm blown away by people who can stand here and with a straight face say justice is being served and the death penalty works. Remember the 300 murders I mentioned last year between Cleveland and Columbus alone? Capital punishment isn't a deterrent. Suppose those 300 lives aren't enough to make the point. In that case, John W Mann, Edward Michael Powers, Beatrice Winlock, Mark A. Brown, Carolyn Colleen Jansen, James Nero, Brian Muha, E. Laura Bell, Joseph John Kopp, Jennifer Ann McCoy, and Edward Miller are people I know lost to violence but may not reach the bar of worst of worst that people like Lou Tobin note. These are just a few names of loved ones people I know have lost to violence. I can keep going. I can't stand here another second and listen to people talk about how those lives didn't mean something. They were good people who had many people who loved them dearly and missed them. Please don't let future families go through what I and so many others suffer through.

I believed in the death penalty. That all changed once my family and I were thrown into the system and reviewed unbiased, factual information surrounding capital punishment in Ohio and the US at large. What we thought was true isn't the case, and it's time to correct it as a state.

Thank you for listening and I would be happy to answer any questions.