

Testimony of Olivia Kaiser
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Before the Senate Judiciary Committee, December 4, 2024
In Support of SB 101 to Repeal the Death Penalty
Sponsored by Senators Stephen Huffman and Nickie Antonio

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 101 to end Ohio's death penalty.

I am a second-year student at Ohio University double majoring in Management of Information Systems and Business Analytics through the Honors Tutorial College. I am a Co-Founder and Co-President of Bobcats for Life, which is a pro-life organization. I also serve as a receptionist at the Athens Pregnancy Resource Center. I am testifying today in my individual capacity and as a person who passionately advocates for freedom from violence that all humans should be granted equally.

At the heart of the pro-life movement is the unyielding commitment to protecting life from its conception to its natural end. This commitment does not waver based on a person's actions, social status, or circumstances. Though it is constitutional for the State to take away someone's right to life, that does not mean the great State of Ohio should commit acts of violence against our own citizens, even those who inflicted acts of violence upon others. The death penalty is both barbaric and archaic, and I believe our State has more humane and effective ways of dealing proper justice without committing continual acts of violence.

Studies have consistently shown that the death penalty is not an effective deterrent to crime compared to life imprisonment. And, taking the life of another in retribution only perpetuates a cycle of violence. It reinforces the notion that state-sanctioned killing can be a solution to societal problems, which fundamentally conflicts with the ethic of valuing life without exception.

Our justice system, for all its merits, is not infallible. Numerous cases have demonstrated the sobering reality that innocent individuals can be, and have been, sentenced to death. Executing an innocent person is an irreversible miscarriage of justice, and from a pro-life perspective, this risk alone is intolerable. Upholding the death penalty inherently implies a tolerance for potential wrongful executions, undermining the value we place on life and the principle that every human being deserves dignity and justice.

It is time that Ohio ends this policy and practice that allows the government to take a human life. I ask you to move quickly to pass Senate Bill 101 and end Ohio's death penalty.