

Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for allowing us to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 72, to prohibit state funded death.

Protecting life must extend to every circumstance and stage of development. This legislation will prohibit the state funding of death. It ensures that taxpayer dollars are never used to fund the termination of human life – whether through abortion, assisted suicide, or capital punishment.

As many of you know, I am a pro-life advocate and have been my whole life. I believe in the sanctity of human life. Twenty years ago, I believed in the death penalty. Today, I do not. I attended a lecture by Sister Helen Prejean in 2013 and picked up a book called False Justice written by former Ohio Attorney General Jim Petro. My eyes were opened to the grave injustices of wrongful convictions.

We know that innocent people have been sentenced to death. Ohio alone has had 11 people exonerated from death row. I've

met some of them.

One such man is Joe D'Ambrosio, who was sentenced to death in 1989 for a murder he did not commit. Had it not been for the divine intervention of Father Neil Kookoothe, who helped secure Joe a good lawyer, he may have been executed. 56 people have been executed in Ohio since 1999. When I understood that capital punishment can kill an innocent person – and it has – I began the work to end the death penalty.

Capital cases cost the taxpayers over \$3 million dollars per trial due to their specialized nature and the appeals process. It also costs more to incarcerate them. Our citizens deserve to know that when a heinous crime is committed, that person will spend the rest of their life behind bars. This bill ensures that.

The voters have spoken about access to abortion. Our bill doesn't challenge anyone's ability to access an abortion under Ohio's constitution. It simply restates that no state funds will be used for an abortion. These dollars will be used to support

women who choose to raise their children.

Abortion, the death penalty, and assisted suicide go against the principles of the sanctity of life and our commitment to human dignity. To be consistent, we must oppose all three. It is time for Ohio to not just be fiscally responsible, but morally responsible and committed to the dignity of every human life at every stage by prohibiting state funded death.

We know that Joe D'Ambrosio was innocent, and I thank God that he no longer faces the threat of execution. Trials are not always fair and prosecutorial misconduct is real. How many of the 113 people currently on Ohio's death row are innocent? Are we not responsible for all life?