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State Representative Joshua E. Williams
Ohio House of Representatives

Good afternoon, Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Synenberg, and esteemed members of the Ohio House Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 457 today.

By most reliable accounts, our country is more fragile now than at any point in the last few decades.[1] Between the very public assassination of Charlie Kirk, the two consecutive attempts on the life of President Donald Trump, the assassination of two Democratic lawmakers in Minnesota, and a sharp rise in protest activity, we cannot risk returning to an America where direct attacks on our civil government, our legislators, and on those who participate in the political process go unpunished.[2]

House Bill 457 outlines the following:

- That no person shall purposely cause the death of an elected official.
- That no person shall purposely cause the death of another person if the offender's motivation for the killing is based on political affiliation, association, belief, or ideology.
- That motivation based on political factors or biological sex must be considered as a relevant factor to sentencing.

[1] https://fragilestatesindex.org/global-data/
[2] https://acleddata.com/update/united-states-and-canada-overview-september-2025

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- And that offenders who are convicted or plead guilty to a felony offense of violence who are found to be fit for a specification of political motivation must receive the maximum prison term for their underlying offense plus ten years.

While our nation is going through tough times, it has certainly gone through tougher. Despite this, throughout American history, we have seen that political violence begets more political violence. Be it the tens, if not hundreds, of bombings carried out by the Weather Underground in the 1970s, or the modern rash of political violence by pro-Palestinian activists on our college campuses and, most recently, an attack on a country club in New Hampshire.[3] [4] We can assume this problem will not be disappearing any time soon, as currently young adults aged 18-29 are approximately four times as likely to believe political violence can be justifiable as individuals aged 65 and older.[5]

Fundamentally, it is our responsibility as legislators to address these crises before they can spiral out of control, and the most powerful way to that is to reenforce that Ohio punishes political violence, not promotes it. By doing this, we can take this bull by the horns and establish Ohio as a national exemplar in supporting the stability and continuance of good governance.

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[3] https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/3473755-what-was-the-weather-underground/
[4] https://www.jpost.com/international/article-868188
[5] https://today.yougov.com/politics/articles/52960-charlie-kirk-americans-political-violence-poll

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I want to thank my co-sponsor, Representative Daniels, for his willingness to help tackle this bipartisan issue. Thank you again Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Synenberg, and fellow members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and I welcome any questions you may have.