

Name: Riley Grady, M.A.

Intern - Northwest Ohio Innocence Clinic

School Email: riley.grady@rockets.utoledo.edu

As an intern of Northwest Ohio Innocence Clinic, Ohio resident and a neighbor to all, **I respectfully and fervently request lines 14,899-14,902, 14,909-14,914, 15,190-15,198, and 41,062-41,068 in House Bill 96, As Passed by the House, be removed.** In addition, I ask that **any relevant sections that would inhibit transparency from Police Departments or limit access to public records be struck from the bill.** No changes to Ohio's public records law should be made without full and independent debate.

We say that our state is 'tough on crime,' but in practice, that toughness is often measured by our refusal to cede, even when the evidence shows we've gotten it wrong. But true toughness isn't about being an immovable wall. It's about having the courage to do what's right, even when it's difficult. It's about standing firm in your values, not in your stubbornness. Upholding due process and correcting injustice are not signs of weakness; they are the marks of moral strength and responsible leadership.

The proposed changes to public records law risk denying justice to innocent Ohioans currently imprisoned in our state—individuals who may be unable to access the evidence or documents necessary to prove their innocence. This is not a fiscal issue. It is a matter of fairness, integrity, and respect for the rule of law.

In the state of Ohio, over 100 people have been wrongly incarcerated for a crime they did not commit. Eleven of those innocent people had been on death row before investigators uncovered exculpatory, occasionally withheld evidence. Since the reinstatement of capital punishment in 1981, nearly 1 in 5 individuals sent to death row in our state have later been found innocent.

When the wrong person is arrested or convicted, the damage is incalculable—not only to the individual, but to their family, and to our collective safety. The true perpetrator remains at large, free to commit more harm. A justice system that cannot correct its errors is not just unjust—it is dangerous. We, as citizens are not safer when the wrong person is behind bars.

Just as importantly, these provisions threaten public confidence in our legal system. Accountability and transparency are essential to maintaining trust in law enforcement and government institutions. I believe in our legal system, I believe it works best when everyone, regardless of status or circumstance, has equal access to justice. That belief means holding the system to its highest ideals, not shielding it from scrutiny. No one is perfect, and we should not expect our police officers and legal professionals to be held to a standard that we ourselves could never meet. Mistakes are inevitable, we are all human. But when mistakes are hidden instead of acknowledged, the damage multiplies.

There are also serious unintended financial consequences to consider. Wrongful convictions cost the state millions in appeals, retrials, incarceration costs, and civil lawsuits. Limiting access to records may

delay justice, but it does not eliminate these costs. Instead, it increases the burden on taxpayers while denying basic fairness to those most affected.

As a member of NWOIC, I share a passion with my fellow interns: a passion to get to the truth. We are learning how to dissect a case, after the fact. But we cannot do that without *all* of the police reports. By digging into the wrongful conviction of Danny Brown and many other cases, we are able to compare statements made at the time of a crime to the trial transcript. But this public records rider, if passed, could shut down our program. That might be what those who proposed this bill want. But I feel confident that that is not what the majority of my community would want.

I understand why proponents of these items want to reexamine the public's access to police and investigative files, but policy decisions of this magnitude should not be embedded in a budget bill. They deserve open debate, thoughtful consideration, and full public input. Bundling them into a spending measure undermines the democratic process and risks unintended, long-lasting harm. Consider why these items are being added to a budget bill, don't they deserve to be fully recognized and considered in complete detail.

**I fervently request lines 14,899-14,902, 14,909-14,914, 15,190-15,198, and 41,062-41,068 in House Bill 96, As Passed by the House, be removed.**

Sincerely,  
Riley Grady, M.A.  
3555 E Manhattan Blvd, APT 6  
Toledo, OH 43611  
[riley.grady@rockets.utoledo.edu](mailto:riley.grady@rockets.utoledo.edu)  
224-563-7154