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As an intern of Northwest Ohio Innocence Clinic, Ohio resident and a neighbor to all, **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.** In addition to those lines, **any relevant sections that would inhibit transparency from Police Departments and access to what should be public records.** No changes to public records law should be approved.

The proposed changes to public records law can be interpreted to *any* criminal record being denied to the public, indefinitely. Those sections of the House Bill 96 are not relevant to the budget and, if passed, **will deny justice to all innocent prisoners in Ohio.** This is without accusation of law enforcement and prosecutors, but the reality that even the most righteous person is only human and subject to mistakes.

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 incriminating, often withheld evidence. Here is a statistic to think about: Since the reinstatement of capital punishment in 1981, almost 20% of death row inmates *turned out to be innocent.*

Inmates and families who have been wronged by the system have lost decades. And we, the citizens, are not any safer when the wrong person is locked up. Being “tough on crime” should be much more than giving the “appearance” of toughness. The denial of public records begs the question: “What are you hiding?”

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 Ohio voters would want.

I repeat, being “tough on crime” means making sure the right person is incarcerated so the public is safe. The cost is too high.

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,

Mercedes Stanek