

House Criminal Justice Committee
Proponent Testimony
House Bill 183
Written Testimony Only

Bekky Baker - Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center

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Dear Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee

My name is Bekky Baker, Program Manager for Death Penalty and Peace & Nonviolence at Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC) in Cincinnati. Thank you for this opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio House Bill 183. IJPC supports House Bill 183 and ending the arbitrary death penalty system. IJPC has been advocating against the death penalty for over 35 years and grounding that work in establishing relationships with people on death row and their families.

Not only is the death penalty a violation of basic human rights, but it operates within a broken system that is impossible to fix. For every five people Ohio has executed, one has been exonerated. Additionally, research from our study on the cost analysis of the death penalty in Hamilton County shows that receiving the death penalty is highly dependent on your geography, your race, and the race of the victim. People of Color make up less than 15% of Ohio's population but they represent 56% of Ohio's death row. When Ohio executions have taken place, 75% of the time the crime has involved a white victim when 50% of murder victims are black. Hamilton County, where we are located, has executed more people in Ohio than any other county. Only ten out of Ohio's 88 counties consistently use the death penalty.

Our organization has witnessed first hand both the moral and monetary cost that the death penalty has incurred upon our society. The average death penalty case costs nearly 1 million dollars while the family members of murder victims go without resources. Instead of funneling money into ending a person's life, we can instead use those funds to create more access to mental health services, provide resources to murder victim family members without caveats, and create preventative programs.

It has been three years since the last execution in Ohio. There should never be another execution. I ask you to consider this testimony on behalf of IJPC and vote yes on this critically important bill. Thank you again for the opportunity.