

Written Testimony HB 183 - Ohio Death Penalty Repeal

Submitted by Richard Clark

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Good Day – My name is Richard Clark. I am a PhD. and a Professor at John Carroll University in Cleveland. I am also the former Chair of the Sociology and Criminology Department at John Carroll.

I am writing in support of HB 183 which would repeal the death penalty in the state of Ohio.

I would like you to consider the following facts.

1. Based upon data from 1973 through 2013, (Capital Punishment in the United States, 2014 Bureau of Justice Statistics) only 16 % of individuals sentenced to death are actually executed. Forty-three percent were removed from death row due to being resentenced, conviction overturned etc., and 6% died of suicide, murder or natural causes. That left approximately 35% still on death row. During this time period, a prisoner was three times more likely to leave death row for reasons other than execution. With the recent decline in executions, this number must be higher.
2. Since 1973, the start of the modern death penalty era, 185 individuals have been released from death row to due to exonerations. Eleven of these individuals were from Ohio.
3. For those executed, the average elapsed time from death sentence to execution approached 20 years (Death Penalty Information Center). Unfortunately, I do not have data for Ohio.
4. The cost of the death penalty is exorbitant. Again, while I do not have data for Ohio, nationally the average cost to secure a death sentence is \$3 million. With only 16% of those sentenced to death executed by 2014, the cost of an actual execution must be significantly higher. I would ask you to consider what else could we do with this money, including perhaps returning it to the taxpayers.
5. There is a human cost to putting a man to death. Someone must prepare the chemicals, someone must strap the individual to the gurney, and someone must start to process of actual execution. Deliberate killing a human being is never easy. Research has suggested that many of those who participate in executions suffer psychological trauma and PTSD.
6. I would ask you to consider the implications of the above facts. We have an expensive procedure, that takes almost 20 years to come to fruition, within the time frame noted above succeeds in its stated goal only 16% of the time, and causes mental and psychological trauma for those who participate in the process. Could you name any other government program you would support that cost so much, fails so often, and traumatizes those who participate in it?

In conclusion, I respectfully ask you to support HB 183 and repeal the death penalty in Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration.

Richard Clark, PhD.