

House Criminal Justice Committee

Proponent Testimony

Ohio House Bill 183

Written Testimony Only

Molly Garfield

6/23/2021

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

Criminal Justice Committee:

My name is Molly Garfield and I am a resident of Cleveland Heights. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio House Bill 183.

From The Equal Justice Initiative website: The death penalty in America is a “direct descendant of lynching.” Racial terror lynchings gave way to executions in response to criticism that torturing and killing Black people for cheering audiences was undermining America’s image and moral authority on the world stage.

Six years ago I read the book "Just Mercy" by Bryan Stevenson. The book is a 100% true book about injustice. Mr. Stevenson's work involves trying to free innocent people from death row.

In one story that features prominently, a black man named Walter McMillan is framed by a sheriff and district attorney who force a man not to recant his testimony. They coerce other false witness testimonies, and actively suppress evidence.

Why? Race. Walter McMillan transgressed racial boundaries by being in an interracial relationship. He was innocent of murder.

The officials who wrongly framed Walter cannot be sued.

As I closed the book I was very angry. There are many arguments for abolishing the death penalty and this is one.

Please consider this as you vote on HB 183.

Thank you,

Molly Garfield