

House Criminal Justice Committee

Proponent Testimony HB 183

Written Testimony Only

Gretchen P. Greenawalt

Tuesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021

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

My name is Gretchen Greenawalt and I am a resident of Clintonville. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio House Bill 183. As I wrote in a recent Letter to the Editor, I oppose the death penalty. I'm asking you to do the same. Here's a bit of my story of why:

It wasn't just the South. Ohio held at least 15 lynchings, as documented by the Equal Justice Initiative (or EJI), between 1877 and 1950.

As a white woman with German roots, I am appalled that the (mostly white) leaders of our state and country have yet to acknowledge, admit and be appalled at this ugly history. It is time to reckon with our painful past. As EJI states "in order to overcome racial inequality, we must confront our history."

Across the pond, Germany has eliminated the death sentence from their country's options for how to treat a person who commits a crime. German leaders know that their past of systemically executing a people group through the Holocaust is a horrific stain on their legacy.

I hope that white Americans will admit that our nation was founded on a "narrative of racial inferiority," and it is driving our actions. I pray that the death penalty will be ended. I hope that Ohio leaders will acknowledge our past.

There is a way for a system of restoration instead of execution. Ask Germany about the blueberry patches in their prison campuses and how those incarcerated go home on the weekends. There is another way.

Thank you for listening to my perspective. I empower you to make a bold choice for life and away from death. Please vote yes on this critically important bill. Thank you again for the chance to testify.

With hope,

Gretchen Greenawalt