

LOGO

SB 288
Proponent Testimony
December 8th, 2022

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is **Tonja Catron**. I am a *Harm Reduction Outreach worker and SUD Counselor in the state of Ohio*. I am here to offer proponent testimony for SB 288.

We are deeply grateful for the thoughtful work that has been put into SB 288 and are thrilled to see that meaningful expansion of the Good Samaritan legislation has been included.

In 2021 Ohio lost more people to overdose deaths than ever before. Without amendments to our Good Samaritan policy Ohioans will continue to die from preventable overdose deaths because those around them fear being punished for calling for help. In the midst of this ongoing overdose crisis no one should be penalized for saving a life.

We are particularly thrilled to see Good Samaritan protection being expanded to those on community control or post release-control. Those under community control and post release-control need this legislation the most, as they are the most fearful of calling authorities. Also, people released from prison and jail are at heightened risk of overdose after release. We know that the highest increase of overdose death rates in Ohio are among Black men. Black men are overrepresented in Ohio's carceral system and so are underrepresented in protection from the Good Samaritan policy. Which contributes to disproportionate losses and unnecessary deaths. This must change. Any restrictions on Good Samaritan policy will result in the loss of lives that could be saved. We are here to save every life.

Thank you for working to make Ohio a true Good Samaritan State by protecting those who save lives by responding to overdoses. We ask you to keep SB 288 moving quickly and to vote yes to saving lives.

Sincerely,
Tonja Catron
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