

Senate Judiciary Committee/House Criminal Justice Committee
Proponent Testimony
Senate Bill 182
Written Testimony Only

Chazidy Bowman

06/14/2021

Dear Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Cecil Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Chazidy Bowman and I am a resident of Hamilton County. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 182

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Chazidy Bowman. I am the President of Opportunities Peoples Justice Leaders, and a member of the Ohio ACLU Action team. I am also a mother of 4 and a wife of someone who is currently incarcerated. Which is why I strongly support Senate Bill 182.

I am here today to not speak from a professional point of view. I am coming today with the perspective of those who can't speak at all. I am the voice of our fellow Ohioans that SB 182 greatly affects.. One specific person I am speaking to you about is Rufus Bowman Jr. When he was at the ripe age of 19 he was arrested. He had a bond amount set at \$3600.00 with 10%. Meaning if he had access to \$360.00. Mr. Bowman could have been able to make bail. Hire an attorney to review and litigate his case. Instead he was held pre-trial in the county jail for 10 months. Only seeing a public defender every 30 who showed a strong lack of concern for him, his circumstance or his plea of innocence. He went through two public defenders. To have the last public defender visit him and tell him he had no knowledge of his case. The best advice he could give him was to take the plea. Due to this Mr. Bowman was influenced by the judge on his case as well as the public defender. To take a plea agreement of 9 years. That if he didnt and chose to continue to trial. He would receive it every day but 1 year. Which would have been 59 years. While Mr. Bowman was in court standing with his public defender. He watched what appeared to be his attorney taking notes. Instead he made scribble marks on the paper. Further proving his lack of concern with his case and his freedom. If Mr. Bowman would have had access to resources as minimal as \$360.00. We feel he would not be currently serving a 9 year sentence. For a crime that he was innocent of.

This isn't just the story of a random person. It is the story of my husband. Who is a father, son, and the face of so many like him. According to research from the Prison Policy Initiative. In large urban communities black felony defendants are 25% more likely to be held pretrial than white defendants. We can no longer allow people of color to be affected by this. We can't allow a system that you, today can make a small gesture of voting yes on SB182. To allow people like my husband access to a minimal amount of money and resources. To get their affairs in order.

Mr. Bowman has now lost 7 ½ years of his youth. Imagine if we had this bail reform in place then. How this would have changed his life. As well as many people like him. Unnecessary pretrial detention harms people's lives because they're put at risk of losing their livelihood. Not to mention that according to a report found by the ACLU of Ohio bail reform would save \$199 to \$264 million each year. With that money saved it could send 74 kids in the above stated community to college. There are 127 colleges in Ohio and 27 prisons that hold 50, 000 people. One of those 50, 000 is Mr. Bowman. He was sentenced to 9 years. In those years he could have received a graduate doctoral degree. Mr. Bowman was given more opportunities that steered him toward prison. When a simple diversion program. With money saved through bail reform could be put in place. That could have led him and those like him to college. \$360.00 can make or break you. Please end this vicious cycle of an unfair and racially biased practice.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote yes on this critically important bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

