

Senate Judiciary Committee
Proponent Testimony
Ohio Senate Bill 182
Written Testimony Only

Chris Kloth

June 14, 2021

Dear Chairman Manning, Ranking member Cecil Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

My name is Chris Kloth. I am a resident of Bexley, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Senate Bill 182.

I am offering testimony as member of Ohio's Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC-OH), an organizing community bringing Reform Jews from across Ohio together in the pursuit of justice in our state. I am the father of an adult son disabled by a severe, persistent mental illness. Finally, I worked in the field of corrections for 16 years, including three years as a trainer for the National Institute of Corrections.

My particular concern related to bail reform is the collateral consequences of incarceration due to the inability to post bail.

My experience in corrections included working closely with people who were held in jail for long periods of time because they could not afford bail while awaiting trial. In most cases they lost jobs, housing and/or children while in custody, regardless of their guilt or innocence. If they were people like my son, with mental illness, they were also unable to get their medications or treatment.

In addition, I am aware that many innocent people took plea deals offered by prosecutors and, often, public defenders with huge caseloads, to make plea deals for lesser offences so they could get out of jail. While they did get out of jail, they discovered they had lifelong prohibitions from certain kinds of employment, educational opportunities, financial aid, housing, and more.

Imagine an 18-year-old person, no juvenile record, innocent of the charge that led to being arrested, and at risk of losing a job, housing, and/or children, or unable to care for a sick relative. In an effort to avoid those consequences, they plead guilty to a lesser offense to get out of jail and discover collateral consequences will follow them for a lifetime.

As a Jew I am called to the work of tikkun olam, the Jewish commitment to repair the world. The current system is clearly broken and unjust.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote yes on this critically important bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.