

Senate Judiciary Committee  
Proponent Testimony  
Senate Bill 182

Leah M. Miller

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Dear Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Cecil Thomas, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

My name is Leah Miller and I am a resident of Cuyahoga County. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony for Senate Bill 182.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Leah and I am an elementary school teacher, a mother, and a wife to a man currently caught in the clutches of a racist, predatory criminal justice system. I strongly support Senate Bill 182.

My husband, a black man who had never been involved in the criminal justice system prior to 2020 when he was involved in a fatal car accident while he was working to provide for our family, is currently incarcerated in Cuyahoga County Jail where he faces inhuman treatment, and constant mental, emotional, physical, and psychological trauma. He is there because we are unable to afford the \$300,000 bond he currently has. Nor do we have property or collateral which is valued high enough to be used to get him released from jail.

I am extremely concerned about the harm pretrial detention is causing not only my husband but the many, many men and women who are currently incarcerated in Ohio before they have been convicted of a crime. The kinds of trauma and abuse they are subjected to while incarcerated causes even more compound trauma upon lives already suffering under systematic brutality and abuse. I find it more than a little concerning that the state of Ohio chooses to spend millions of dollars keeping people away from their families and communities but refuses to use those resources identifying and correcting the social determinants of health and wellness so often missing within communities of color.

Why not spend more money within urban schools providing students with learning experiences which teach them useful skills, and enhances their natural talents and abilities without forcing them into antiquated boxes of success rooted in standards surrounding ideas of white superiority? Where are the additional funds for social emotional learning and guidance within the schools and broader communities? Why is it so difficult to have broad access to social programs which can help those struggling silently with providing necessities such as food, shelter, stability and safety for their families?

Unfortunately, the mental health and stability of black and brown people within the community is grossly and inhumanely undervalued and then when and if they ever encounter the criminal justice system they are traumatized and upon being finally released from prison the trauma they experienced seeps into the community and causes even more damage.

The amount of money currently used to imprison so many innocent Ohioans reflects the moral standard of our society. This is not a system which adequately reflects the ideology of innocent until proven guilty, but instead seems to reflect the verbiage of innocence to those who can pay for it. How can a bond system so bias ever espouse justice? Why are our tax dollars being used to line the pockets of prison owners and predatory industries instead of being reinvested positively into the community?

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