

Hello my name is Ellen Abdur-Rahim and I am here today as a representative of The Black Abolitionist Collective Ohio and the Abolish Slavery National Network, to ask that the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee votes YES on SJR1.

The 13th amendment states “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction”

This exception clause shows that slavery was not abolished as we were made to believe in American history books, and instead it was reformed.

The abolishment of slavery in the United States and specifically in the state of Ohio is overdue, we can not continue to live under the 13th amendment exception clause which directly impacts black brown and marginalized communities.

As the prison population continues to rise, crime does not decrease. So why do we need to live in a state of legalized enslavement via our prison system?

The federal government recognized Juneteenth as a national holiday today, but I ask how can this country recognize Juneteenth but not abolish slavery within our constitution?

The Federal government is also introducing a joint resolution to counter the exception clause of the 13th amendment backed by Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon and Congress woman Nikema Williams of Georgia.

So I am asking today that Ohio joins Colorado and becomes an example for other states in the Midwest and across the nation to end slavery in our constitution.

If you vote against this bill today, make no mistake you’re voting to keep slavery legal in Ohio.

Vote Yes on SJR1