

SB 216
Opponent Testimony
Billy Golden
2/7/2022

Dear Chairman Manning, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer opponent testimony for SB 216.

My name is Billy Golden. I am an Ohio resident that works with people who use drugs and is someone with lived experience. I oppose Senate Bill 216 because a positive drug test does not determine a person's ability to be a good parent. A positive drug test tells nothing about a person's inherent ability to take care of their family.

Research shows us the harms of removing children from parents has long term psychological consequences that may be worse than leaving children in their home.

https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2087&context=all_fac

Sadly, the picture that is painted of people who use drugs is often one of chaotic drug use, where priorities and responsibilities are neglected. Rarely do we hear about people who are not in chaotic substance use, yet many people that use drugs are able to maintain daily responsibilities of life. I can think of quite a few people that provide for their children and still use drugs. For example, a former client I worked with only came to syringe exchange services on specific days when her child was the child's father. She invested in a locked safe where she kept her drugs and paraphernalia, and only used enough of a drug to maintain wellness/keep from going into withdrawal, so that she could be available and present to attend to her child's needs. This is not an uncommon story. She provided better for her child than people I knew that didn't use drugs. Her child excelled in school, ate well balanced meals, socialized with friends, and was very close with both parents.

I believe the negative consequences of this bill would be far reaching and damaging. This bill will punish many functional and healthy families, causing permanent trauma to children and parents alike. Instead of punitive actions, supportive actions, such as low threshold and barrier access to harm reduction materials, mental health counseling, and medically assisted therapies for opioid use disorder need to be made available.

Again, I oppose SB 216 because a positive drug test does not determine a person's ability to provide for their child/children. Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony and I urge you not to move forward to enact this bill.

Sincerely,
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