



SB 216
Opponent Testimony
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2/7/22

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.

As a lifelong Ohioan and first-generation US-American, I have proudly chosen to serve the community that raised me as a nonprofit executive for the last decade. Prior to my work within the field of nonprofit administration, I was a dutiful educator within our astounding state university system. Since I have had the privilege of serving so many Ohioans, I have witnessed just how damaging family separation is and can be on entire communities of support for children.

Family separation comes in many forms: immigration detention and deportation, prevention through deterrence policies, Child and Family Services, native boarding schools, indigenous relocation, orphanhood and more. We are surviving through times of unprecedented loss. So many children without parents (due to covid, war, mental health issues and more) are struggling to find care, love, acceptance and safety. As a state, Ohio has suffered one of the highest rates of death per capita in the last two years. Some families within our great State have the privilege of obtaining physical and mental health care based on their employment status, others do not. Regardless of access to healthcare, all people are struggling to cope with the realities of our present situation, that is we have insufficient systems of support to deal with rising levels of inflation, rising sea levels, rising global temperatures, rising threats of nuclear war, and more.

I have seen first hand the effects of family separation. During already untenable times, separating a parent from their children, only exacerbates the pressure cooker of trauma that they are existing within. As a faith leader working with formerly incarcerated individuals, I have witnessed probation as a poverty tax that has not encouraged rehabilitation as it is said to, but rather established a set of hoops that individuals must jump through to meet arbitrary standards of worth. If our goals are truly rehabilitation and maintaining the safety of children, we should be offering counseling and support, rather than the torture of separation.

My godson was born with exposure to Soboxone. Luckily, my childhood best friend was receiving treatment for her addictions which were formed out of trauma, growing up during an opioid epidemic on top of an unemployment epidemic near Youngstown, Ohio. Now her son is 10 and President of his 4th grade class. Her children were her reasons for living while she was first in recovery. Without her children's mutual love, I doubt she would have been able to find the motivation to live for herself which I now see her thriving in after many years of sobriety.

Please, consider your own coping mechanisms and the access to care You have as representatives with full and comprehensive healthcare support. Until all people have this same access we can not continue to create Further barriers to compassion and rehabilitation. I urge you to NOT move this legislation forward. Thank you so much for HEARING from your constituents, I hope you will take our concerns to heart.

Sincerely,

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