



Proponent Testimony - SB 288
February 28, 2022

Dear Chairman Manning, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony for the Good Samaritan provisions of SB 288, as well as offering three additional amendments.

My name is Pastor Hank Osmundson, I am a resident of Delaware, Ohio, and I serve as the Executive Director of Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio (UUJO). I am among a very fortunate number of people whose lives have not been directly impacted by drug addiction or overdose in my immediate circle of family and friends. I do not take that blessing lightly, nor do I think it absolves me from the need to ensure that everyone is protected from harm. In fact, it is my Christian faith that requires me to do so. That is why I support expanding Ohio's Good Samaritan provisions.

Regardless of one's faith tradition, I think we would be hard pressed to find someone who did not know at least the premise of the story of the Good Samaritan from the Christian Bible. Certainly, we cite it whenever we talk of doing something good for someone else without the expectation of reward or even the bonds of relationship. Good Samaritans help other people because it is the right thing to do. The particulars of the social location of the Samaritan in this Bible story is extraordinarily relevant to this legislation in Ohio in 2022. One of the reasons this story was so stunning to the people who heard Jesus tell it is because Samaritans were among the least respected and most mistreated people of that time. Jesus juxtaposes the Samaritan with so-called "upstanding" people - including leaders and clergy - who simply pass the injured traveler by. Instead, it is the reviled Samaritan who offers help to this man who has been beaten and robbed.

I believe that it is the duty of our society to make it as easy for someone to be a Good Samaritan as we possibly can. This is why I join others in calling for you to support SB 288 and amend it so that it is more effective at empowering people to do good and save lives. First, expand the provisions of this legislation to include protection for those on parole or probation who act as Good Samaritans. Providing that protection would simply save lives by not placing someone in a position of having to decide whether or not to risk themselves. Second, remove the restriction on the number of times a Good Samaritan can receive immunity from penalty. No one should be penalized for saving the life of someone else. Third, remove treatment assessment

requirements. The assumption that everyone who possesses drugs or drug paraphernalia is suffering from addiction and in need of treatment is detrimental. When people voluntarily seek treatment, the outcome is generally more successful.

Once again, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony and I am grateful that you are considering expanding Good Samaritan provisions in Ohio. But, I also urge you to take this opportunity to make those provisions more effective and expansive. A life cannot be changed if it is lost. Empowering more people to be Good Samaritans will save lives. Please vote to adopt the proposed amendments and pass SB 288. I firmly believe it is the right and just thing to do.

Blessings & Hope,
Pastor Hank Osmundson, M.Div.
Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio