



**SB 288**

**Proponent Testimony**

**Drea Reany**

**Southeast Ohio Field Organizer**

**Showing Up for Racial Justice Ohio**

**2/28/22**

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 **3 additional amendments**.

My name is Drea Reany and I am a community organizer who works in the small community of Nelsonville, Athens County, Ohio. After years of building relationships with many everyday people in our community who are affected by substance use and overdose, our organization would like to express our support for Ohio's Good Samaritan legislation and our hope to expand pieces of it. We believe that the fewer penalties there are for attempting to save a person's life, the more lives will be saved.

Our work in overdose prevention has illuminated for us that people who use drugs are often best positioned to save someone's life. According to the conclusions of [this study](#) published in Drug Alcohol Depend and available on the National Institutes of Health website, many drug users themselves are more likely to witness and be on hand during another's overdose to deliver first aid, and are therefore the most important populations to target when thinking about overdose prevention initiatives. We want those who are most likely to intervene in an overdose to be able to do so freely without restrictions.

**To reduce these restrictions, we ask that the following amendments be added to SB 288:**

- 1) **Remove restrictions for those on parole and probation (community control or post release-control).** People released from prison and jail are at heightened risk of overdose after release
- 2) **Remove limitations on how many times an individual can receive the immunity.** There should be no limits on how many times you can save a life.
- 3) **Remove treatment assessment requirements.** Treatment is most successful when it is voluntary.

Every week during our harm reduction supply distribution when we distribute naloxone and other safer use supplies to our fellow community members, we talk to someone who has already used this life-saving drug or know a close loved one who has used naloxone to save someone's life. One of our volunteer members has used naloxone to save a next door neighbor's life. Since July we have passed out almost 200 doses of naloxone within our town of 5,300 people. Unfortunately Athens County is nonetheless expected to report record overdose numbers for 2021.

Our passion for this work stems from our belief that everyone deserves to live a life of dignity and self-determination, and this includes all people who use drugs. We believe that no one should be sent to jail or otherwise punished for saving the life of their friend, neighbor, family member, or even a stranger on the street.

According to the US Government Accountability Office, states with more expansive Good Samaritan Laws see lower overdose rates. We hope that Ohio can become one of these states, especially seeing as we have the nation's 4th highest overdose rate according to the Centers for Disease Control. If Ohio's expanded Good Samaritan legislation is not passed, we know we will see more people in our immediate community and across the state die. A person who has died of an overdose is not able to enter the process of recovery and become a healthy member of their family or community.

We urge you at this critical time when thousands of Ohioans' lives are being lost to overdose to pass this Good Samaritan legislation including the 3 amendments outlined above.

Sincerely,  
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