

I am a member of St. John's Episcopal Church in Franklinton, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Columbus. One of our traditions for the past 20 years has been to hold a "street Church" at an abandoned gas station on Broad Street, approximately at the border between Franklinton and the Hilltop. The service begins with worship and is followed with a meal. We have never missed a Sunday, no matter how bad the weather.

At these events I have met many homeless people and heard lots of sad stories. Many of these people have criminal records – some will admit their guilt but many others simply express anger at the "system" for putting them in jail when they were innocent. Many have been put in the spiral of losing jobs, then losing homes, then losing family because they did not have enough money to post bail. The unfortunate result of the spiral is often that they turn to crime. So the current bail system does not promote public safety – just the opposite. Folks who may have been jailed for a crime that would not lead to jail (if convicted) are forced into jail for lack of money.

Please stop the spiral. The Courts and prison system should promote public safety by only focusing on folks who are a danger to society, not folks who are simply poor. And by changing the focus, millions of my tax dollars could be put to better use. Instead of HB 607 & HJR 2, please pass HB 315/SB 182.