



HB 699

Proponent Testimony

November 30th, 2022

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is China Darrington. I am the Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for Thrive Peer Recovery Services. Thrive is the largest provider of peer recovery support for substance use disorder in the state of Ohio and in doing that service we come in contact with individuals affected by overdose risks and behavioral health needs. I am offering proponent testimony for SB 288.

We are deeply grateful for the thoughtful work that has been put into HB 699 and are excited to see that meaningful expansion of the Good Samaritan legislation has been included in the subbill version of HB 699.

In 2021 Ohio lost over 5000 people to overdose deaths, more than ever before. Without amendments to our Good Samaritan policy, Ohioans will continue to die from preventable overdose deaths because those around them fear being punished for calling for help. In the midst of this ongoing overdose crisis no one should be penalized for saving a life.

We are particularly pleased to see Good Samaritan protection being expanded to those on community control or post release-control. Those under community control and post release-control need this legislation the most, as they are the most fearful of calling authorities. Also, people released from prison and jail are at heightened risk of overdose after release. We know that the highest increase of overdose death rates in Ohio are among black men. However, black men are overrepresented in Ohio's carceral system and so are underrepresented in protection from the Good Samaritan policy. Which leads to disproportionate losses and unnecessary deaths. Any restrictions on Good Samaritan policy will result in the loss of lives that could be saved.

Thank you for working to make Ohio a true Good Samaritan State by protecting those who save lives by responding to overdoses. We ask you to keep House Bill 699 moving quickly and to vote yes to saving lives.

Sincerely,

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