



**Testimony by Jessica Dickinson, Ohio Fair Courts Alliance  
On House Bill 259  
Before the Ohio House Finance Committee  
October 9, 2023**

Chairman Edward, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 259, which would abolish the death penalty in the state of Ohio and modify the number of jurors that may be challenged in cases where a defendant may be sentenced to life imprisonment. This testimony is on behalf of the Ohio Fair Courts Alliance, a statewide network of organizations, community leaders and concerned citizens. We are dedicated to creating a court system that exemplifies and protects equity, fairness and justice for all.

We support this legislation to end the death penalty in Ohio as it is racially biased, unjust, inhumane, arbitrary, and erroneous. Former Ohio Supreme Court Justice Paul Pfeifer characterized the death penalty as a “death lottery...depending on where you happen to commit the crime and the attitude of the prosecutor.” This is not justice.

Eleven men have been exonerated from Ohio’s death row, who collectively spent 216 years incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. For every five people Ohio has executed, one has been exonerated from death row. As one Ohio exoneree stated, “when execution is the result, the system must be perfect 100 percent of the time,” and we know that it is not.

You have the power to right these wrongs moving forward. This legislation has unprecedented support from both Republicans and Democrats, signaling a momentous shift in public opinion on attitudes about capital punishment. In addition, this legislation is endorsed by advocacy groups, death row exonerees, victim’s family members, and religious organizations.

Nationally, 23 states plus the District of Columbia have legislatively abolished the death penalty. We urge you to pass House Bill 259 and make Ohio the 24th.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jessica Dickinson  
Ohio Fair Courts Alliance