

House Finance Committee/ Proponent Testimony
Ohio House Bill 259
Written Testimony Only

Mackenzie Doyle

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

My name is Mackenzie Doyle and I am a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio House Bill 259.

For me, as a Catholic, I am called to uphold the dignity of all life, from womb to tomb and everything in-between. Keeping the death penalty does not allow for mercy or redemption. Nor do I think that the state should be in charge of taking another's life no matter what the person has possibly committed.

Moreover, two books I've read have really opened my eyes to the injustice of this punishment. One is the *New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander and *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson. These books showed me how the whole criminal legal system is set up to exploit those who are poor and those who are people of color. Mr. Stevenson's book put a human face on the larger picture that Ms. Alexander's book shows. I am concerned with keeping a system that is all too often wrong or is set up to exploit those of different skin colors or socioeconomic status. In Ohio, the numbers are startling. While people of color make up less than 15% of Ohio's population, they make up 56% of Ohio's death row, 33% of those executed, and 72% of those exonerated. When Ohio executions have taken place, 75% of the time the crime committed has involved a white victim. Since 1973, more than 195 death row inmates have been exonerated of all charges and released. Ohio is home to 11 death row exonerees who collectively spent 216 years incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. For every five people the state of Ohio has executed, one has been found innocent. This kind of

mistake is far too frequent when human lives are at stake. Moreover, those who are poor often do not have access to affordable or effective counsel. They are appointed lawyers who are frequently overworked, underpaid, and inexperienced in trying death penalty cases. Too often they fail to adequately investigate cases, call witnesses, and challenge forensic evidence.¹

Lastly, I do not believe that this punishment actually deters crime nor helps families, communities, and survivors heal in the long run. The National Research Council of the National Academies concluded that studies claiming the death penalty has a deterrent effect are fundamentally flawed.² Studies have shown that murder rates, including murders of police officers, are consistently higher in states that have the death penalty, while states that abolished the death penalty have the lowest rates of police officers killed in the line of duty.³ Moreover, the death penalty is often sought without input from the survivors. Additionally, there is no space for repairing or restoring broken relationships in the communities where the crime occurred.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote yes on this critically important bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

¹ http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4500&context=fss_papers

² National Research Council of the National Academies, *Deterrence and the Death Penalty 2* (Daniel S. Nagin & John V. Pepper eds., 2012).

³ <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/policy-issues/deterrence/capital-punishment-and-police-safety>