

Senate Judiciary Committee
Senate Bill 101
Written Testimony Only

Douglas Benbow

November 14, 2023

Dear Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Douglas Benbow and I am a resident of Groveport, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio State Senate Bill 101.

First and foremost, I believe that every human life is sacred and deserving of dignity and respect, regardless of the crimes they may have committed. Our criminal justice system should focus on rehabilitation, healing, and providing opportunities for individuals to reform themselves, rather than resorting to taking a life as a form of punishment.

Furthermore, the death penalty is disproportionately administered to the poor and people of color, highlighting the deeply ingrained systemic biases within our legal system. Studies have consistently shown that race and financial status influence the likelihood of receiving a death sentence, indicating a fundamental flaw in the fairness and impartiality of our judicial system. Such unjust disparities should not be tolerated in a society that claims to value equality and justice for all.

In addition to these moral and ethical concerns, there are practical reasons to oppose capital punishment as well. The risk of executing innocent individuals cannot be ignored. History has shown us numerous cases where individuals on death row were later proven to be innocent, often after spending years or even decades behind bars. The irreversible nature of the death penalty means that any miscarriage of justice cannot be undone, making it an unacceptable risk.

Since 1973, more than 105 death row inmates have been exonerated of all charges and released, and with that many exonerees, 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, the death penalty does not serve as an effective deterrent to crime. Numerous studies have failed to establish a conclusive link between capital punishment and lower crime rates. Instead, it perpetuates a cycle of violence and revenge, offering no real solution to addressing the root causes of crime in our society.

As a Christian, I am guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ, who exemplified mercy, forgiveness, and the value of every human life. He taught us to love our enemies, and to seek redemption and transformation. The death penalty stands in stark contrast to these foundational principles of Christianity, and as such, I cannot support its use in our state.

I implore you and your colleagues to reconsider the use of the death penalty in Ohio. Let us strive for a criminal justice system that values human life, promotes justice, and seeks to rehabilitate rather than destroy. May we work towards a society that upholds the dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of their past actions, and embraces the possibility of redemption and healing.

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

Sincerely,
Douglas Benbow