

Senate Judiciary Committee
Senate Bill 101 Written Testimony Only

Jennifer Morin-Williamson
November 13, 2023

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

My name is Jennifer Morin-Williamson and I am a resident of Dayton, Ohio. I work as the Peace, Justice and Ecology Coordinator for the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Trotwood, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 101.

As devout women of faith, the Sisters of the Precious Blood have steadfastly opposed capital punishment since 2002, articulating our stance through a formal corporate statement. Our commitment is rooted in the profound belief in the dignity of every individual, rejecting revenge as incompatible with our values. Moreover, we emphasize that the death penalty fails to contribute to the healing of victims; rather, it exacerbates the trauma experienced by the families involved.

The issue of innocence looms large in our considerations. Since 1973, over 195 death row inmates nationwide have been exonerated, revealing a disturbing margin of error in the justice system. Ohio, in particular, has seen 11 exonerates collectively spending 216 years behind bars for crimes they did not commit. Such frequent miscarriages of justice underscore the unacceptable risk associated with capital punishment.

Additionally, the application of the death penalty in Ohio unveils troubling racial disparities within the criminal justice system. Despite people of color comprising less than 15% of the state's population, they constitute 56% of Ohio's death row, 33% of those executed, and a staggering 72% of those exonerated. This data, coupled with the fact that 75% of executions involve crimes against white victims, underscores the racial bias inherent in the current system.

The movement towards abolition is gaining momentum nationally, with 24 states and Washington D.C. severing ties with the death penalty. We urge Ohio to join this progressive wave. Furthermore, on an international scale, the death penalty tarnishes the reputation of the United States.

Public sentiment echoes the call for change. A recent statewide poll conducted by The Tarrance Group revealed that 59% of Ohioans support replacing the death penalty with life imprisonment without parole.

In light of these considerations, we earnestly implore you to reflect on our testimony and cast a vote in favor of this pivotal bill. Thank you for affording us the opportunity to present our perspective on this critical matter.

Peace,
Jennifer Morin-Williamson
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