

Senate Judiciary Committee  
Senate Bill 101  
Written Testimony Only

Samantha Searls  
November 15, 2023

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

My name is Samantha Searls and I am a resident of Cincinnati. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 101.

I am in support of abolishing the death penalty because murder is wrong, period. Why do we murder people who murder people to show that murdering people is wrong? The death penalty is not a deterrent to murder. In fact, according to data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports analyzed by the Death Penalty Information Center, murder rates have consistently been higher in states with the death penalty since 1990. In the latest year captured in the data, 2019, the murder rate was 25% higher than states with no death penalty. Murder doesn't deter murder.

I currently serve as a Program Director for Ignite Peace, an organization focused on educating and advocating for peace, challenging unjust systems, and promoting the creation of a nonviolent society. For nearly seven years I've worked to address violence as it manifests itself in institutional policies and procedures.

The death penalty is the most extreme manifestation of institutional violence in our society. It literally uses public money to murder people. It uses public money to murder people who may not even be guilty. For every five executions, one person has been exonerated in our state. That sounds like a risky and irresponsible use of taxpayer money to me, especially when there are so many programs out there seeking to deter violent crime in more effective, nonviolent ways.

What about victims' families? Are they served by this violent system? Or are they harmed in the process, too? I've heard many stories about victims' families who are re-traumatized due to the high profile nature of these cases and the lengthy appeals process. Instead of focusing on retribution and revenge on their behalf, what if we helped them get the healing support that they truly need?

If you truly want a more peaceful, nonviolent society, abolish the death penalty. Period. Thank you for considering my testimony and please vote YES on Senate Bill 101.

Samantha Searls