

Senate Judiciary Committee
Senate Bill 101
Written Testimony Only

Mr. Joel Shenk

November 7, 2023

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

My name is Joel Shenk and I am a resident of Toledo, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 101.

I support this bill because the death penalty has been shown to have significant racial disparities. 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. These kinds of racial disparities are unacceptable and renders any further enactment of the death penalty morally indefensible.

Additionally, death penalty sentencing is inaccurate. 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.

With these kinds of glaring failures, it is no surprise that a recent statewide public opinion poll in Ohio by the Tarrance Group found that 59% of those surveyed support replacing the death penalty without the possibility of parole. As of today, 24 states plus Washington D.C. have cut ties with the death penalty. Ohio can and should be the next.

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

Sincerely,

Joel Shenk