

Senate Judiciary Committee
Senate Bill 101
Proponent Testimony – Written Only

Lauren Staley

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

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

At least 11 people in Ohio have received a death sentence for crimes they did not commit. That means that for every five death-row inmates the state of Ohio has executed, one has been freed after new evidence revealed that he had been wrongfully convicted. And those are just the ones we know about—the cases in which the error was discovered and the conviction was vacated before an execution took place. It does not account for the possibility that state officials have unknowingly executed someone who was actually innocent of the crime or that other innocent inmates remain on death row in Ohio. Our system does not (and probably never will) get it right 100% of the time. The risk of executing even one innocent person should be enough to warrant abolishing the practice.

Studies have shown that the cost of capital cases surpasses the cost of life-imprisonment cases by \$1 million to \$3 million per case. As the Attorney General recently noted, based on those figures, the extra cost of imposing the death penalty on the 120+ inmates currently on death row in Ohio could range between \$128 million and \$384 million. Instead of spending millions of Ohio tax dollars on a risky, irreversible punishment that doesn't keep us safe, we should commit more resources to supporting the families of murder victims and to victims of other violent crimes.

A recent statewide public opinion poll conducted by The Tarrance Group found that 59% of those surveyed in Ohio—including a majority of Democrats and Republicans—favor replacing the death penalty with a sentence of life in prison without parole. As of now, 23 states and Washington D.C. have cut ties with the death penalty. It is time for Ohio to follow suit.

Ohioans are ready to move beyond the death penalty, which doesn't serve victims' family members, saps valuable state resources, and risks executing innocent people. I ask that you vote yes on this important bill.