

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/aclu-ohio-urges-lawmakers-improve-bail-bill>**

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COLUMBUSThe ACLU of Ohio says that House Bill 439 does not go far enough to reform the states broken bail system. The bill requires courts to use a risk assessment tool when setting bail in misdemeanor cases that the ACLU cautions will need closely watched over time. Although the bill aims to lessen the overall dependence on cash bail, the ACLU of Ohio wants to see a variety of improvements to the bill in order to increase fairness and efficiency. Chief Lobbyist Gary Daniels and Policy Counsel Caitlin Hill will provide interested party testimony at the House Criminal Justice Committee Tuesday, Jan. 23, at 1:30p.m.

One of the proposed suggestions offered by the ACLU is the elimination of cash bail for misdemeanor and some felony charges. The exclusive use of money bail for low-level offenses simply does not make the public safer, and instead creates a system where those with financial means are released while those without resources languish in jail, said Gary Daniels, chief lobbyist for the ACLU of Ohio. Freedom should not depend on how much money someone has in their bank account.

A second recommendation is for the bill to require courts and the Criminal Sentencing Commission to compile race-based data. The inescapable conclusion when examining our current bail system, much like our overall criminal justice system, is its disproportionate negative impact on people of color at all stages, noted Caitlin Hill, policy counsel at the ACLU of Ohio. Many jurisdictions that utilize risk assessment tools regularly monitor racial data to ensure that there is no bias against people of color, so tracking this data at the statewide level is a standard expectation for reform added Hill.

Reforming bail in a meaningful and thoughtful way is one of the most important steps the General Assembly can take. HB 439 is an improvement, but it will not reform the system on its own, concluded Daniels.

Written testimony of House Bill 439 is below.

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