

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/ohio-must-expand-dna-testing-availability>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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COLUMBUS- The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio renewed its call on legislators in the Ohio General Assembly to pass Senate Bill 77, which would expand the availability of DNA tests to people who believe they were wrongfully convicted of a crime. The ACLU urged lawmakers to pass the legislation following the U.S. Supreme Courts decision yesterday in *District Attorneys Office v. Osbourne*, which ruled that people have no constitutional right to DNA testing after their conviction. However, the ruling allowed states to extend those rights through legislation.

ACLU of Ohio Staff Counsel Carrie Davis said, Despite the many protections in our justice system, it is imperfect. For a variety of reasons, there are people who have been convicted of crimes who are innocent. Since the advent of DNA testing, at least 232 people nationwide who were found guilty of murder, rape, or other violent crimes were exonerated. Passing Senate Bill 77 will ensure that more people who may be innocent have access to these tests and that evidence will be preserved.

Ohio is one of 47 states to provide those convicted of a crime with limited access to DNA testing, however SB 77 would greatly expand those rights. The bill would grant access to DNA testing to a larger number of inmates and create more comprehensive protocols for how police departments store and maintain biological evidence. In addition, it also mandates that police record interrogations of those accused of some violent crimes and protects the integrity of police line-ups from possible bias.

SB 77 passed committee unanimously on Wednesday, June 17 and is awaiting a full vote by the Senate. It is sponsored by Senator David Goodman (R-New Albany).

It is in everyones best interest to be sure the wrongdoer is convicted. When someone who is innocent is wrongfully convicted, it jeopardizes the integrity of the system and can deprive innocent people of years of their lives. It is imperative that the state pass legislation that guarantees access for all people to ensure that justice is served fairly and accurately, Davis concluded.

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