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ATTORNEY AND COUNSELOR AT LAW

April 15, 2015

Honorable Ryan Smith, Chair  
and Members of the Finance Committee  
State House  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: H. B. 64  
Removal of front license plate  
on historical vehicles  
Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police is opposed to the provision in H. B. No 64 that would provide for the elimination of the front license plate on historical vehicles. In fact, the Association is opposed to any legislation that would eliminate the front license plate. This opposition extends to H. B. No. 104 as well. H. B. No. 104 would provide that the failure to display a front license plate is a secondary offense with a maximum fine of \$25 for a violation. The Association understands that the provision in the budget bill would only apply to historical vehicles. However, even if the front license plate is only eliminated on historic vehicles, this action erodes the argument for maintaining a second plate in the broader sense.

H. B. No. 59 of the 130<sup>th</sup> General Assembly created the License Plate Safety Task Force with the task of examining whether having dual license plates is beneficial to law enforcement and to also determine whether the state should continue its dual license plate requirement. After three hearings the Task Force recommended that Ohio should maintain the current law of requiring two license plates because they are a useful tool for law enforcement.

It is of interest to note that no individuals or groups appeared to testify in support of one license plate. All witnesses providing testimony urged Ohio to maintain two license plates. In addition, pursuant to the Task Force's final report, 31 states currently have two license plates. Also, two states (Connecticut and Massachusetts) have recently returned to using two license plates and Michigan had introduced a bill in late October 2013 to require dual license plates.

The front license plate is a critical law enforcement tool used in a variety of situations—from auto theft investigations, DUI enforcement, hit/skip crashes, to bank robbery and even homicide investigations. When investigating these various situations, law enforcement officers rely upon

eyewitness accounts and physical evidence to track down drivers who damage property, commit various criminal offenses, or injure or kill other motorists. Again, in all of these various situations, the front license plate is sometimes the only lead an officer possesses.

The front license plate is also valuable to law enforcement when captured by video surveillance at convenience stores and gas stations where crimes like robberies occur. The front license plate is also of value when License Plate Readers are used—they often assist in solving crimes that would otherwise have become cold cases.

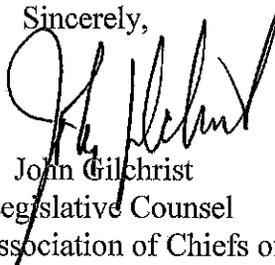
State law requires school bus drivers to report violations of motorists passing a stopped school bus to law enforcement. Removing the front license plate will be a step backward with regard to being able to identify both the driver and the vehicle when a motorist violated a stopped school bus. It should be noted that many school buses are equipped with cameras.

Neighborhood block watch groups and uniformed police volunteer programs often rely upon both front and rear license plates to report suspicious vehicles or activities. Also, many government entities and private businesses have photo cameras in parking lot, in front of their businesses, and other locations. These cameras often capture the license plates of criminals.

In short, there is value in seeing a vehicle's plates both coming and going

Lastly, the Association believes that the vast majority of vehicle owners give little thought to the fact that two plates are required—they simply take it for granted that Ohio vehicles have two plates. However, there is a very small vocal group that wants to eliminate the front plate. The Association has concerns that legislators want to eliminate the front plate to accommodate this small vocal group at the expense of law enforcement.

Sincerely,



John Gilchrist

Legislative Counsel

Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police