



**OHIO HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
HOUSE BILL 6 (BARNES)  
TESTIMONY OF DENNIS R. HETZEL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OHIO NEWS MEDIA ASSOCIATION**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, and Ranking Member Johnson, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today— my name is Dennis Hetzel and I am President and Executive Director of the Ohio News Media Association. We support House Bill 6, which would prohibit websites that publish certain criminal records from charging a fee to remove those records.

Some websites and other outlets have used Ohio’s public records laws to take unfair advantage of average citizens who have been arrested. These websites or publications post photographs or other information and then charge individuals a fee for removal. The fee can be hundreds of dollars. Photos may even appear on multiple sites in succession and each site will charge a removal fee.

This is a practice none of our members would follow. The challenge in legislation such as this is to address the undesirable practice without colliding with our open records law and the underlying Constitutional rights of freedom of speech and freedom on the press guaranteed by both the U.S. and Ohio Constitutions. This concept is critical to the criminal justice system. Records that result from arrests and investigations must remain public.

We believe that Rep. Barnes’ bill accomplishes this difficult balancing act to achieve a goal with which we all agree, and we greatly appreciate his willingness to work with us to develop such language. Thank you for your consideration of and attention to this issue.

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