

Tom Patton Sponsor Testimony - HB 278  
House Criminal Justice Committee  
9/19/17

Chairman Manning, Vice Chairman Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 278. This legislation aims to increase the penalty for drivers who fail to move over for stopped traffic. In the unfortunate case that a motorists' failure to move over and their actions result in injury or death of a law enforcement officer or motorist, the penalty will be increased from a minor misdemeanor to a misdemeanor 1.

Just this past year two Ohio law enforcement officers, Cleveland Police officer David Fahey, and Ohio State Patrol Trooper Kenneth Velez, were struck and killed in the line of duty while working on the side of the highway. In response to these terrible tragedies, Rep. Kelly and I agree that it is pertinent to find ways to better protect our law enforcement officials who serve in these precarious situations.

Current law states that failure to move over, or if unable to change lanes, slow down for emergency vehicles is a minor misdemeanor traffic offense, however, in the wake of recent deaths the Fraternal Order of Police brought this idea to my desk.

By re-classifying this type of offense as vehicular assault, and raising the penalty to a first-degree misdemeanor, it is our hope that we can bring more awareness to these tragic situations that could be avoided by simply driving with more precaution.

Representative Kelly and I feel that this legislation is a simple, yet important adjustment to help better protect those who serve and protect us.

I would like to thank my joint sponsor, Representative Kelly, in aiding with the advancement of this legislation, and I would like to thank the Chairman and Committee members for allowing us to testify today on HB 278.

At this time, I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.