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Written Testimony of Chief of Police

Michael W. Tussey

Before the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee

On House Bill 327-Legislation updating Ohio's penalties for importuning offenses.

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Thank you Mr. Chairman and all members of the Committee for giving me the opportunity to present my testimony to you today on House Bill 327. My name is Michael Tussey and I am the Chief of Police for the Village of Baltimore in Fairfield County, Ohio. I have been a police officer serving in various assignments for almost forty years. During that time I have investigated, identified and arrested sexual predators.

I along with other officers and investigators have talked for years about the inconsistent sentencing of convicted predators. Depending on the judge and the geographical location of the court the sentence can be very different. Setting a standard for the sentencing not only helps the community and law enforcement but gives guidance to courts that may not deal with sexually oriented offences on a regular basis.

By amending section 2907.07 of the Revised Code to amend the penalties for the offense of importuning you would be sending a clear message that Ohio values and will protect the rights of our children. It also sends a clear message to the predators that the days of catch and release are over. I have personally been involved with cases where the offender has been arrested and transported to jail only to be back on line the very next day trolling for their next victim. Currently in the Central Ohio area only about 20% of those arrested do any time associated with their crime. These offenders' network and they know that the chance of being incarcerated for their crime is small and as such are willing to take the chance. It is also important to remember that most will re-offend. I have had offenders tell me during interviews after arrest that they have

repeatedly re-offended. Some have disclosed as many as 30 times before actually being caught.

I firmly believe that House Bill 327 would correct this problem and make these offenders accountable for their actions by closing a loophole in Ohio law that is allowing sexual predators to get away with their crimes against children with little or no time served. Law enforcement believes that the threat of incarceration would be a huge deterrent to these predators. Many of these predator operate as normal law abiding citizens in their communities and are able to hide long distance convictions when there is no absence from the community.

As a longtime member of the law enforcement community I come here today to ask that you please strongly consider House Bill 327. We need to send a clear and unified message that Ohio will hold those that target children accountable for their actions.

Once again, I thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for allowing me the opportunity to offer this testimony in support of House Bill 327. I will be happy to take any questions at this time.