

Columbus Office:

Vern Riffe Center
77 S. High Street, 10th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111
(614) 466-5786
Brigid.Kelly@OhioHouse.gov



Committees:

Finance
Economic Development,
Commerce and Labor
Government Accountability
and Oversight
Aging and Long Term Care
Rules and Reference

BRIGID KELLY

State Representative

Chairman Manning Vice Chairman Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebreeze, and members of the House Economic Development, Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 496.

This bill, has been introduced in the past, at least twice, with bipartisan support. And this issue is one that is ongoing; in the Cincinnati area, there were at least three significant attacks on transit operators over the last year.¹

The Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS) provides information, advice, and recommendations on transit safety and other issues as determined by the Secretary of Transportation and the Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).² According to a 2015 report, "Preventing and Mitigating Transit Worker Assaults in the Bus and Rail Transit Industry,":

*"Assaults against transit workers pose a serious threat on many levels by threatening the physical safety and emotional well-being of transit workers, endangering passengers, and lowering employee morale. The emotional effects of assault can deter transit employees from returning to work and passengers from using transit.."*³

Transit operators are not only responsible for the safety of the persons on their coach, but also for the safety of other motorists and pedestrians; an attack on a transit operator carries a great risk to the health and safety of the public.

This bill would strengthen penalties for attacks on transit operators or persons who are reasonably known to be transit operators, to a fifth-degree felony with an associated fine of up to \$5,000, or to a fourth degree felony if this is a repeat offense.

The bill would make permissive the posting of a notice to ensure that riders are aware of proper code of conduct and penalties for not adhering to the policy. In addition, the legislation would increase the penalty for fare evasion to a second-degree misdemeanor.

Representative Perales and I believe that House Bill 496 is a prudent step to making our state safer for our transit operators and others on Ohio's roads. I appreciate the chance to offer testimony and would be happy to answer any questions.

¹ <http://www.wlwt.com/article/metro-bus-driver-recovers-after-being-beaten-by-two-female-riders/15858220>

² <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/safety/transit-advisory-committee-safety-tracs>

³ https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/Final_TRACS_Assaults_Report_14-01_07_06_15_pdf_rv6.pdf

31st House District:

Northside - Clifton - CUF - Corryville - Walnut Hills - East Walnut Hills - Evanston - Avondale - Madisonville
Oakley - Hyde Park - Amberley - Norwood - Silverton - St. Bernard- Columbia Twp.- Mt. Auburn

Printed in house.

