

House Bill 79
Ohio House Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee
June 20, 2017

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Lipps, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee, thank you for allowing me to share my experience and to testify as to the need of this bill.

As a Firefighter EMT I have had the privilege to serve the citizens of this great state for the past 18 years. For ten years of my service I have been a Firefighter Paramedic with the Columbus Division of Fire, the last two years of which I have been granted the ability to serve in the position of "TEMS" tactical medic. TEMS is the Tactical Emergency Medical Support unit that serves alongside the Columbus Division of Police SWAT, INTAC as well as assisting as a mutual asset to several other entities including Franklin Co. SWAT, FBI and as a component of the Columbus Division of Fire Bomb Squad.

The position of TEMS has allowed for extensive training beyond that of a typical "street Medic", it has allowed me to train alongside some of the most premier tactical operators the city of Columbus has as well as several other operator/instructors throughout the country. The emphasis of this training is to be able to provide quality medical care while operating in austere dynamic environments such as barricades, hostage situations, active shooters and/or terrorist events. With a growing number of these types of events throughout the country the necessity of "Tactical Paramedicine" seems to be as needed now as it has ever been.

Working alongside the agencies we support, one thing has become clear to me. That even with a full time dedicated team there are not enough resources in an active situation to dedicate several officers to the security of the TEMS members.

Typically this is not a concern, but in the event of an active shooter or terrorist event these individuals will hardly have time, let alone the resources to insure our safety while trying to provide medical care to the wounded. The TEMS medics are well versed in Rescue Task Force and

Casualty Collection, which should allow us to retrieve the wounded and place them in an area of cover so that we may initiate care. We are provided an adequate level of body armor to protect ourselves from being shot in the Chest/back or Head, but what we do not possess is the ability to defend ourselves and more importantly defend our patients. Should for some unforeseen reason, whether it be multiple shooters or terrorists that overwhelm or somehow make it past our first responding law enforcement I believe we should have the ability to defend and protect ourselves and our patients. The TEMS medics I know at this time will readily place themselves between a threat and those in need, regardless of being armed or not. We have an unspoken resolve to protect the injured and keep our officers healthy and “in the fight”. We are first and foremost there for the preservation of life, and by in no means do I personally believe as a medic I am there as law enforcement or to be used in an “offensive fashion”. I do believe as part of our duty to preserve life, we should be trained and ready to stop a threat from causing further injury or death.

It seems that most locales and municipalities are reluctant to implement or allow for their “tactical medics” to carry a firearm either for political reasons or perceived liabilities. I believe this bill alleviates this by providing the commonsense guidelines, the necessary training and the oversight needed to implement this as law.

As a husband and father I exercise my constitutional right to protect my family and myself while not on duty. I’m hard pressed to find a reason why I should not be able to do the same when placed in an environment that the likelihood of me needing to do so is greatly increased.

Thank you for allowing me to advocate for myself and the citizens of this state, and thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
John P. Hagan Jr.