



**State Representatives
John Patterson & Sarah LaTourette**

Substitute House Bill 318
Sponsor Testimony
House Finance Committee
March 20, 2018

Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and distinguished fellow members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on Substitute House Bill 318, legislation that would establish basic qualifications and training requirements of school resource officers. While current law does allow school districts throughout Ohio to hire school resource officers (SROs), Ohio law lacks basic requirements for how SROs are trained and does not clearly identify even basic responsibilities.

As this esteemed body is already aware, in 2012 the City of Chardon was struck by tragedy. A student opened fire at Chardon High School just as school was starting, leaving three students dead and two others injured. What some of you may not know is that Chardon's football coach, Frank Hall, heroically chased the shooter out of the school, preventing further casualties. Coach Hall saved innocent lives that day and is regarded in the Chardon area today as a legendary hero. Not long after the shooting, the Coach Hall Foundation was established with this mission: "to provide effective means to protect against school violence and improve the quality of life in our school communities."

Representative Patterson and I both represent the Chardon School District, and last year the Coach Hall Foundation approached us with the concept for the As Introduced Version of House Bill 318. They believe, and we agree, that in order for SROs to effectively protect students, the state must establish at least a base level standard for school districts to follow when they choose to hire SROs. Representative Patterson and I led a very thorough interested parties process while working on this legislation and, based on the input and feedback from stakeholders,

have made several changes to this legislation through that process. After I turn it over to Representative Patterson to walk you through the details of the sub bill, I'd like to spend some time talking through some additional changes we are looking to make to the bill and why we've been re-referred to Finance Committee.

Should HB 318 become law, SROs must complete a training program approved by the Ohio Peace Officer's Training Commission as well as an additional 40 hours of training that includes instruction regarding skills, tactics, and strategies including:

- School campus design, school building security needs and characteristics;
- The nuances of law enforcement functions conducted inside a school environment, including understanding the psychological and physiological characteristics consistent with the ages of the students in the assigned building or buildings, de-escalation techniques, and behavior management strategies;
- The mechanics of being a positive role model for youth, including appropriate communication techniques which enhance interactions between the school resource officer and students;
- Classroom management techniques to provide law-related education to students and methods for managing the behaviors sometimes associated with educating children with special needs;
- The laws regarding compulsory attendance, as set forth in Chapter 3321 of the Revised Code; and
- Identifying the trends in drug use, eliminating the instance of drug use, and encouraging a drug-free environment in schools.

Also contained within Substitute House Bill 318 is the requirement that a school district that wishes to obtain school resource officer services must enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the law enforcement agency supplying the services. This MOU would clarify the purpose of the school resource officer program and roles and expectations among the participating entities.

Last month, Substitute House Bill 318 was unanimously voted out of the Education and Career Readiness Committee and, as I mentioned, re-referred to us here in Finance Committee for additional discussion.

We all agree that safety is of the utmost importance for all of our citizens, but it is especially important that we take every possible step that we can to ensure the safety of our schools. We believe HB 318 is an important common sense step toward that goal. We also believe there is more than can, and should be done.

Working with Representative Patterson, the Speaker's Office, as well as with Senator Gardner and President Obhof's Office, we have started to identify a framework for a non-competitive grant process to further improve safety across all of Ohio's schools. While we are still working through the details, including which agency or department would administer this program, it is my hope that this one-time grant would be used for, but not limited to, the following types of items:

- Training money for SRO certification
- Safety devices to secure classroom doors
- Training equipment money for ALICE or similar training
- Safety equipment at schools (ballistic shields, first responder bags, safes for storage, hand held magnameters, etc)
- Gun lockers
- All grade level educational resources

Again, this is by no means an extensive list, but I wanted to give the committee a general understanding of the conversations that have been taking place as we craft the language we will be asking you to review in a future hearing. As always, Representative Patterson and I are open to other ideas and I'd encourage you to reach out to my office if there is something you feel strongly should be added to the conversation.

In addition to the funding component I just discussed, the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association has requested that we amend the bill to use the definition of "peace officer" found within the Peace Officer Training Commission Law, as opposed to the current definition used in the bill; and we would respectfully request that change be incorporated as well.

Thank you for allowing us to offer sponsor testimony on Substitute House Bill 318 today. We would be happy to answer any questions or address any concerns the committee may have.