

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF MAGISTRATES

The Voice of Ohio Magistrates

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To: Ohio House Government Oversight & Accountability Committee
RE: HB341

Dear Chair Blessing , Vice Chair Reineke & Committee Members:

As President of the Ohio Association of Magistrates, I am writing on behalf of our members to express our support of HB 341. I also thank the committee for amending the bill to include magistrates with the judges as individuals whose personal information is exempted from the public records' disclosure.

As judicial officers, we perform many of the same functions as judges. This includes holding hearings and making decisions that affect individuals. Often the individual associates a negative outcome to his/her case with the person who conducts the hearing. We are frequently reminded to protect our safety and our family's safety, both in the courthouse and outside the courthouse. The ability for a litigant to retrieve our personal information as a public record document does not comport with protecting our safety.

I can relate two incidents that underscore the need to include us in the bill. Several years ago, a magistrate came home from the downtown courthouse to find a litigant on her front porch in the suburbs. After the police arrived, she learned that the litigant had taken a bus to her home. I was the subject of a public records request several years ago when a disgruntled litigant asked for my address and other personal information. This litigant had exhibited aggressive behavior during the pendency of his case. Luckily these incidents did not result in any negative consequences except for stress and extra vigilance.

By including magistrates and judges in this bill, the legislature would be providing protection to all judicial officers at the same level of other public service workers.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you would like any other information.

Sincerely,

Pamela A. Heringhaus
President, Ohio Association of Magistrates