

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

PLEASE COMPLETE THE WITNESS INFORMATION FORM BEFORE TESTIFYING

DATE: 2/14/17

NAME: NICK KONVES

ORGANIZATION: COLUMBUS BICYCLE COORDINATION UNIT  
(IF APPLICABLE)

POSITION/TITLE: SERGEANT

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: COLUMBUS STATE: OH ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

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ARE YOU REPRESENTING: YOURSELF  ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU WISH TO TESTIFY ON  
LEGISLATION (BILL NUMBER): HB 9  
SPECIFIC ISSUE: \_\_\_\_\_  
SUBJECT MATTER: \_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU FAVOR  OR OPPOSE \_\_\_\_\_ THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION REGARDING THIS ISSUE?

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE GROUNDS ON WHICH YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE SUCH ENACTMENT:

addresses & fixes major safety concerns

WILL YOU HAVE A WRITTEN STATEMENT, VISUAL AIDS, OR OTHER MATERIAL TO DISTRIBUTE?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

(IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES TO THE CHAIRMAN OR SECRETARY)

HOW MUCH TIME WILL YOUR TESTIMONY REQUIRE? 15-25 minutes

Thank you Chairman Green, Vice-Chair Greenspan, ranking-member Sheehy and members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee for allowing me to testify to you today on House Bill 9.

I am currently assigned to the Columbus Police Bicycle Coordination Unit. In this role, one of my main responsibilities is to provide roadway safety advice involving motor vehicles and bicycles within the City of Columbus. I first became aware of House Bill 154 when several local media outlets ran stories on its passage. One media outlet ran a short teaser that urged viewers to tune in to learn about a new law that "legalized" going through red lights. Naturally this sparked my interest and I read the new bill.

After reading the bill, I have significant safety concerns with one word: vehicle. Motor vehicles differ from bicycles in many ways that impact roadway safety. Motor vehicles are much larger, weigh more, require greater stopping distance, enclose the driver, and are full of a plethora of distractions. Bicycles on the other hand, allow the rider to be in the open air, involve fewer distractions, and are less common on the roadway.

Without the language change proposed in House Bill 9, the current law allows motor vehicles to treat intersections like stop signs. This makes me stop for a second and picture in my head, a society without traffic signals. A society where stop signs are the only traffic control at a busy intersection, such as Broad St. and High St. There are a number concerns I see with this picture. While I know this example might seem extreme, it brings to light my safety concerns.

The first major safety concern involves blind intersections. If you have recently traveled northbound on Front St. at W. Long St. behind Police Headquarters, you might have noticed it is very difficult to see any traffic approaching on E. Long St. due to construction and new structures on the corner. If a vehicle were to proceed lawfully into this intersection on Front St. after stopping at a red traffic signal and there was a vehicle lawfully traveling on E. Long St. there would likely not be enough time for the vehicles to change course or come to a stop to avoid a collision once the two see each other, even if both were driving with due regard. I have had to go through this red traffic signal while driving using lights and siren and it is a very dangerous. I have bright lights, audible signals, and am a trained emergency vehicle operator and still have concerns when going through. I am concerned with allowing the public to undertake the same action without the audible and visual safety devices, in addition to the emergency vehicle operations training. This intersection is only one of many intersections throughout the state that are set up like this.

The second major safety concern I have deals with the nature of traffic signals vs. stop signs. While I full understand House Bill 154 isn't proposing the erection of stop signs at intersections where traffic signals currently exist, I think it is beneficial to note how each affect roadway safety. Stop signs are unique in that all sides are required to come to a complete stop and typically cause drivers to look in all directions before proceeding through and intersection. This greatly reduces the speeds and severity of traffic crashes when they occur. Traffic signals only require vehicles facing the red traffic signal to stop

while those facing green can travel the posted speed limit through an intersection. I can speak for myself when I say I am less vigilant when traveling through a green traffic signal because I know I have the right of way. Allowing a vehicle to legally proceed through a red traffic signal is dangerous because vehicles facing a green light travel faster through the intersection and don't expect someone to be proceeding through a red light. We don't get the benefits of all vehicles at that intersection slowing down like we do where stop signs are posted.

The third concern I have involves the nature of accidents at intersections. I have been a paramedic for 11 years and have seen hundreds of traffic collisions in my career. Intersections serve as a breeding ground for t-bone accidents. These are the most dangerous type of accident because the force of the accident travels directly through the passenger compartment and driver of the vehicle unlike rotation crashes where the force is displaced throughout other parts of the vehicle. I have personally witnessed low speed t-bone collision turn fatal due to the nature of the force displacement. If vehicles are able to lawfully travel through a red light, they are more at risk for being involved in a t-bone traffic crash.

The fourth and final concern I have deals with discretion. House Bill 154 allows the driver of a vehicle to decide when it is appropriate to proceed through a traffic signal. My opinion and decision to proceed will likely be different than almost everyone else in this room. This makes enforcement and prosecution very difficult and nearly impossible. I know when I have been involved in a traffic collision, I expect a police officer to respond and determine who is at fault, so I can seek assistance through their insurance company for repairs. I fear that a driver may find themselves involved in a collision with someone who proceeded through a red light and find it difficult to recover if the driver claims they slowly proceeded through the intersection with safety, but couldn't see oncoming traffic because of the design of the intersection. I have testified many times in various court systems during my career and foresee this causing a big problem for prosecution.

I applaud your efforts to make it easier and more convenient for bicycles to travel through intersections when they are unable to actuate the signal; however, as previously mentioned, I am concerned allowing motor vehicles to do the same places the public at risk. Bicyclists can stop faster, can hear better because they aren't enclosed in a vehicle and typically have less distractions than the driver of a motor vehicle.

Thank you again for hearing my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee at this time.