

September 12, 2017

The Honorable Steven Arndt, Representative
89th District, General Assembly of the State of Ohio

Dear Sir,

Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of H.B. 255 to allow Township Police Departments to respond and act on emergencies or enforce the law on Interstate Highways within their jurisdiction. This is very important to me and my Fire Department which I will explain in a few minutes but first let me introduce myself and also to try and explain our Response District.

My name is Bruce Moritz, I am currently the full time Fire Chief of Lake Township. I have been in the Fire Service for over 48 years and a Fire Chief for close to 29 years, I was Fire Chief when three Departments came together to form a Fire District in Clay and Allen Townships (three Fire Departments, two Townships and two villages) with the goal of providing full time Advance Life Support Services to our communities. We came together for a common goal to protect and serve our community and I am proud to say I was the first full time Fire Chief of the Allen – Clay Joint Fire District and this Department today is a very well run Department. I also served many years as the Northcentral District Director of the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association and Then as President of the Association in 2012 – 2013.

Lake Township is located in Wood County in Northwest Ohio. We encompass 34 square miles and sit just a few miles outside of Toledo, Ohio. Our population is approximately 10,972 people who reside either in the Township or our two Villages of Millbury and Walbridge. Due to our location the transit population is much more. Lake Township has four State Routes 51,163, 420 and 795 passing through it. We also have Two Interstate Highways, Interstate I-280 which runs north and south (we have four access points to I-280 within our jurisdiction) from Interstate I-75 in Toledo to Interstate I-80 the Ohio Turnpike which runs east and west across our Township. Near this interchange (Exit 71 of the Ohio Turnpike) I-

80 and I-280 we have six large truck stops with hundreds of trucks passing through each day and night not including all of the passenger vehicular traffic along with it. Our transit population out here is in the thousands with people passing through each day. People from all walks of life good and bad pass through daily. There are also 5 hotels in this part of the Township which keeps our Public Safety people pretty busy. It is almost its own community in that area of the Township.

Now why do I support H.B. 255? Our Lake Township Police and the Lake Township Fire Department work very closely together. They watch out for us and we watch out for them where we can. We are very close and know each other which we should in this day and age. Our Police Department is very good at what they do in protecting the citizens and traveling public of Lake Township. In a lot of cases they are first on the scene of most emergencies. By the way they took the same **Law Enforcement Classes and the Same Oath of Office** as any other Law Enforcement Officer in the State of Ohio. They have the same arrest powers as any other law enforcement officer has. The question I have is why do we want to limit them in their own jurisdiction?

Due to our proximity to Toledo we have a lot of people who come to this area to commit a crime. They come out thinking this is a good area to burglarize, steal, and do drugs. I-280 is a main drug route from Detroit down into Ohio. Once they get to I-80 and State Route 20 they can go anywhere in the State east and west. It is a funnel into Ohio. I know an Assistant Prosecutor from the lower northeastern area of Ohio and this is where the drugs come from.

We as a Fire Department also respond out on to these Interstates for motor vehicle accident and fires. Our Police Department comes out there with us to help protect us from the traffic passing through. If you have not been out on the Interstates during an accident you must realize it is one of the scariest and dangerous places to be. The traveling public is more interested in getting from point A to point B in the fast time possible. Even though laws exist to protect us they do not slow down and they are more interested in seeing what has

happened than where they are going and they do not slow down while passing by.

I can tell you there are not enough Ohio Highway Patrol Troopers and Sheriff's Deputies to go around. They have too much area to cover and when you do commit them they are tied up for some time leaving a big gap in coverage in other areas. I know in my area, I very seldom see a Deputy, I can count on one hand how many times I have seen on a Lake Township scene in my four years here, and there are only a few Deputies for each shift for the whole county. The Highway Patrol in most parts has to respond from distance just to get to one of our accidents. Our Officers are already there securing the scene. This is a very big safety factor for me. If my Officers are not allowed out on the Interstate this leaves me on an accident scene with only one option as my manpower is also limited and I am responsible for the care of the victims. This option is to shut down the Interstate for the safety of the victims and my people. It is well documented in this country that our first responders have been killed or they have had our vehicles smashed into by distracted drivers because everyone wants to see what has happened. I have seen people drive by videotaping as they go by. Commercial vehicles just will not slow down which puts my people at risk of being hit.

When I first came here to Lake Township there were about seven vehicles in storage due to drug arrests on I-280. These were all good stops until one person found a very smart lawyer who found a loop hole in the law saying Townships had no jurisdiction on an Interstate. Our Officers are very good at finding these people so why stop them?

Our State Attorney General has stated that we have an opiate epidemic in the State of Ohio. Why with so much limited resources would we want to **Limit Sworn Law Enforcement Officers** from upholding the law within their own jurisdiction? As a grandfather of three little children I fear for them as they grow up in this society. Why would we not use every resource we have to stop the movement of drugs in this State? If you limit my Police Department to where they can respond

within their jurisdiction then does that mean I am limited to where I can respond within my jurisdiction also? Am I allowed out on a limited access highway also? I have to use the same route that they have to take. When I enter the Turnpike I will exit at the next Exit down (out of my jurisdiction) or one of the Service Plazas (out of my jurisdiction) because it is not safe for one of my engines or ambulances to use the turn arounds as either my back end is in the high speed lane or my front end is in the high speed lane it is not safe. So should I not respond out on the turnpike because I may leave my jurisdiction?

In this world that we live in today we need to be able to collaborate and utilize as many resources as possible that we have to work smarter **together** and safer. You can give all the Narcan away that you want but if you don't stop the drugs from coming in it is a losing battle. I can tell you there are not enough Sheriffs Deputy's or Highway Patrol Troopers to stop it all. I ask you today as a Grandfather and Fire Chief to consider H.B. 255 to allow our Township Officers who are **Sworn Ohio Police Officers** to respond to any area within their jurisdiction to up hold the law within their jurisdictions. These are smart dedicated Police Officers, please let them do their jobs within their jurisdiction don't tie their hands behind their backs please let them do their job they are trained to do!

I can try and answer any questions you may have and if I cannot my Chief of Police can. Thank you for your time.

Bruce R. Moritz
Fire Chief
Lake Township Fire Department