



**Officer Donald Widmer**  
**H.B. 255 Proponent Testimony**  
**September 13, 2017**

Chairman Green, Vice-Chair Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today on House Bill 255.

I am a police officer with the Perrysburg Township Police Department in Wood County. The impact of the 2015 Ohio Supreme Court decision in *State v. Brown* in conjunction with the current language in Ohio Revised Code sections 4513.39 and 2935.03 seriously hampers the efforts of law enforcement across our state. These Revised Code Sections and the Ohio Supreme Court Decision prevents most Township Police Officers from stopping a motor vehicle on an interstate highway for almost every traffic violation.

Interstate 75 is within my territorial jurisdiction and it is a known North-South pipeline for drug trafficking, human smuggling, and is a highway heavily traveled by the criminal element. As with many law enforcement agencies across the state, the Perrysburg Township Police Department prides itself on its efforts to proactively prevent crime. One of the most important tools in that effort is the ability to make traffic stops for traffic violations. During my fourteen years in law enforcement I have stopped countless vehicles for various traffic violations and many of those traffic stops have resulted in the apprehension of those engaging in a variety of serious criminal acts. Stopping those who drive intoxicated, those who traffic illegal drugs, those who transport stolen property, those who engage in human trafficking, and many other criminal acts is essential for the safety and wellbeing of our communities. This effort is ever more important as the heroin epidemic ravages our state and human trafficking is on the rise across our country.

Every year there are an increasing number of fatal crashes on I75, many of which are a result of reckless and/or intoxicated drivers. I have personally experienced many times when the report of a reckless or intoxicated driver traveling on I-75 has been passed from Agency to Agency in the hopes that someone is close enough to take enforcement action. Many times I or one of my fellow Township Officers have been closer than any other responding police unit from other jurisdictions. We are usually not called to assist because the current law prevents us from taking enforcement action for traffic offenses on I-75 within our jurisdiction. As a result, the suspected intoxicated driver passes through the area before a police unit can arrive and continues to endanger the public.

The Ohio Supreme Court decision of *State v. Brown* and the current language in the Ohio Revised Code unnecessarily hinders the efforts of law enforcement across our state. I believe that we are living in a time that requires vigilance and proactivity from our law enforcement community. We must use every legal and ethical law enforcement tool to stop those who would do harm to the innocent. The passage of HB 255 would remove the handcuffs from Township law enforcement officers who desperately want to do their part to stop the criminal element and protect the communities in which they live and work.

I want to thank Representative Hambley for introducing this piece of legislation. I am asking this Committee to support this legislation because I believe that it will improve the effectiveness of Ohio law enforcement and will benefit the communities in which we live.

Once again, I would like to thank you all for allowing me to deliver testimony and I am happy to answer any questions.