

Proponent Testimony of United States Marshal Peter Elliott

Regarding House Bill 38

Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Bill 38, which will help to protect first responders and military members in the State of Ohio.

I have been a law enforcement officer in the State of Ohio for 34 years. I began with a local department and have served the last nearly 30 years as a federal law enforcement officer. I also come from a family tradition of Ohio law enforcement: my father is a retired federal law enforcement officer and my brother and sister are currently local law enforcement officers, but it all started in the early 1900s with my great grandfather – John Mitchell Elliott – who proudly served as the Police Chief of Alliance Ohio.

My last 14 years I have had the privilege to serve as the United States Marshal for the Northern District of Ohio. During that time I created the Northern Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force which now consists of more than 350 local, state and federal officers. These officers have one of the most dangerous jobs in America, capturing murderers, rapists, sexual predators and other violent fugitives who are the worst of the worst and who often have nothing to lose as we close in on capturing them.

These officers, and all those who serve and protect in our state, are the reason I fully support HB 38 to expand the offense of purposely targeting these dedicated officers who already face enough risks in their profession. Those who would target the foundation of our safety and security deserve to be punished to the fullest extent, but of course my hope would be that this bill would serve as a deterrent to those who would even consider such a heinous act as purposely targeting a first responder.

In 2016 alone, 21 police officers were killed in ambush attacks. Killed for no other reason than the uniform they wear and the profession they have chosen. Right here in Ohio, on January 17, 2016, a Danville police officer – Thomas Cottrell – was killed by a man who had gone out that night looking to kill an officer according to his ex-girlfriend who tried to warn police. These attacks are occurring across the country with alarming frequency. We owe it to those who are willing to risk their lives on a daily basis to support legislation such as HB 38. No first responder should have to worry or wonder whether the call they are responding to is legitimate or is an attempt to lure them to a location. HB 38 will protect our first responders and have a positive impact on our profession for generations and generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.