



OHIO PATROLMEN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

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Chair Lang, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony for House Bill 299. My name is Thomas Austin and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association. We represent nearly 8,000 corrections officers, police officers, deputy sheriffs, and dispatchers across Ohio.

Under House Bill 299, no person shall purposely cause the death of an off-duty corrections officer, a parole or probation officer, or a parole board member. Anyone who knowingly kills one of these officers or parole board members shall be guilty of aggravated murder. Similarly, committing felonious assault against one of these individuals and targeting them specifically because of the position they hold shall be a first-degree felony. House Bill 299 gives much needed protections to those who make it their life's work to protect others. The work of corrections officers is often very dangerous and unpredictable, and are not afforded the same protections under the law as police officers. These additional protections are greatly needed.

By increasing the penalties for aggravated murder, attempted murder, and target felonious assault perpetrated against off-duty corrections officers, parole officers, probations officers, and parole board members, we hope our members will be able to do the work they love and not have to constantly look over their shoulder. Our members take on a risk to their safety by simply doing their job. House Bill 299 looks to dissuade those that would do harm to our members to think twice before murdering or harming them.

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 members of the OPBA, I strongly urge you to support House Bill 299 to provide much needed protections to those who work to keep our jails, prisons, and communities safe.

Thank you for your consideration of the bill and I am available for your questions.

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