

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I sincerely appreciate that this matter is getting another hearing, as the troubling trend of assaults on sports officials has continued since our last meeting.

On Friday, August 31, 2019, a high school football player at Dayton Dunbar High School head butted an official unprovoked, with his helmet on. The official suffered injuries and had to seek medical treatment for this incident.

On October 19, 2019, right here in Columbus, an official was hospitalized after being caught in the middle of a fight between Marion Franklin and Walnut Ridge. He had to miss work due to the injuries he sustained.

Also on the 19<sup>th</sup>, a coach ran onto the field during a seventh grade football game between Watkins Memorial and Licking Valley and assaulted the official, leading to a full on fight.

On December 17, 2019, at Peebles High School, a basketball official was assaulted by a spectator while trying to leave the game floor after the game had concluded. The official has PTSD from an incident that occurred while he was a correctional facility guard, which was triggered by this event. This is the second assault that has happened at Peebles High School in the last calendar year.

On January 19, 2020, a parent who was kicked out of a fifth grade girls basketball game came down onto the floor and headbutted the official.

On February 14, 2020, a parent at Franklin High School came onto the basketball court and went after the official, grabbing, pushing, and shoving him.

The OHSAA is also currently investigating a basketball incident where the official wishes to remain anonymous. The official was shoved over from behind during a live ball in a varsity game from a spectator that was upset with how the game was going. This occurred in central Ohio.

Our hope is that this legislation will continue to spotlight that his type of behavior is not acceptable. What is currently in place simply isn't getting the job done. The number of assaults are on the rise, and we've seen repeat occurrences now. If the penalties were stiffer, perhaps this wouldn't be the case.

Officials should be shown the same decency and respect as others in the educational environment who receive extra protection, such as teachers, administrators, and bus drivers. 21 other states already have this type of legislation, and Ohio would be a welcome addition to them. Protecting officials in Ohio is protecting athletic opportunities for the youth in Ohio, who are at risk of having their games cancelled due to a shortage of officials, through no fault of their own. Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.