



MONTVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Terry P. Grice, Chief of Police

Chairman George F. Lang
Ohio House of Representatives - Criminal Justice Committee
Columbus, Ohio

May 28th, 2020

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee:

First allow me to thank you for affording me the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 539. My name is Matthew Neil and I am the Lieutenant of the Montville Township Police Department, in Medina County. I have been involved in Law Enforcement for the past 26 years, and I have served the last 20 years as a police officer in two different Township Police Departments, in Medina County.

As you know under current law, Township Police Departments, whose population is under 50,000 have no jurisdiction on the Interstate Highway Systems that run through their geographical boundaries.

Both Township Police Departments that I have worked for have over 5 miles, each, of I-71 running through the Township's geographical boundaries. These 10 total miles of I-71 encompasses several exits including the heavily traveled, commercial area of I-71 and State Route 18.

Over the past 20 years I have responded to hundreds of crashes on I-71 ranging from Non-Injury to Fatal Injury. I have been dispatched to hundreds of other calls for service, from disabled vehicles, to drunk drivers to individuals throwing rocks off of overpasses. I have personally successfully assisted in stopping several vehicle pursuits, and I have been publically recognized for helping save the life of a woman that was thrown from a vehicle during a Domestic Dispute, while traveling on the Interstate.

On a routine basis, my department is dispatched to patrol I-71 to look for vehicles and individuals that are wanted for crimes that occurred in other jurisdictions. These crimes range from theft from a nearby Outlet Mall, to helping stop and apprehend the fleeing suspect that killed Ohio State Patrol Trooper James R. Gross, on January 19th, 1996.

Besides talking about the thousands of calls that we have handled on I-71, I would like to focus on the portion of the current Revised Code Section 4513.39(B)(1) which restricts Township Police Department's jurisdiction in traffic infractions on Interstates, when that Township does not have a population of more than 50,000.



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Currently, there are only 6 Township in the entire state whose population meets this 50,000 threshold. In fact there are only 14 cities in the entire state that meet this threshold; and Revised Code section 4513.39(A), gives every city and village complete jurisdiction on Interstates running through their municipality, no matter their population. Interestingly enough, when it comes to our 88 counties in Ohio, I found that 37 of them don't even meet this 50,000 population threshold, and their Interstate jurisdiction is unlimited.

When it comes to training, Township Police Officers are trained the same, and held to the same Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission standards, as any other law enforcement officer in the state.

I truly believe that this bill evens out the necessary Interstate jurisdiction issues of Township Police Departments. This bill is about having arrest authority on roads that are already within our geographical boundaries and the proposed population threshold of 5,000 is much more reasonable. By supporting this bill you are supporting us, and giving us the tools necessary to enforce, apprehend and combat our ever-growing OVI and Drug issues that take lives of Ohioans every day. By supporting this bill you are unleashing the current restrictions that prevent us from saving lives and doing our job.

H.B. 539 is about safety and enforcement, not about ticket revenue and not about taking away jurisdiction from others. Law enforcement is in a position today where it is imperative to work together to achieve great results, this bill allows for future collaborative efforts.

Thank you for your time today. If you have any questions I would be happy to respond to them. I hope you will support this important public safety bill.

Respectfully,

Matthew A. Neil
Lieutenant