

In Support of HB 208

Thank you to the members of the Ohio State Senate for allowing me to submit my written testimony reference Senate Bill No. 208 to amend sections 2932.121 and 2923.126 and to enact section 2923.1214 of Revised Code to allow a law enforcement officer or investigator, whether on or off duty, to carry a weapon on certain premises open to the public.

I am the Past President of Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #74, Eastern Hamilton County, and have been an Ohio law enforcement officer since 1999. Police officers come in contact with many individuals on a daily basis as part of their job. Our job is inherently dangerous because of that. That is a fact that we all take with us to work every day. However, in recent time it has become more apparent that our job is not simply a nine to five vocation but one that we carry with us everywhere we go whether in uniform, working, or out with our families. In our times today it doesn't take much for someone to look officers up on the internet, see where they live, see who they are married to, and many other things about them. This is one of the reasons I feel that this bill is paramount for the safety of all the officers we have working today. Officers, once off duty, don't simply become non-officers. If they are out with their family at church, shopping, or any other activity they can be noticed and approached by individuals whom they have dealt with on the job. This person may not be happy with the police service they received and may wish to do harm to that officer or their family. The ordinance as it is written now puts officer's lives on danger when they are no longer working. The State of Ohio has invested time and money into each and every officer to make sure they are trained to react appropriately and in a timely manner. Having a law that takes away their tools to do this depending on where they are just because they are not working is a recipe for disaster. I personally have been approached by an individual more than once while I was not working and with my wife. Fortunately, nothing adverse occurred but had I been in a place where it was unlawful for me to carry my firearm and this had turned into a life or death situation I would not have been able to effectively defend myself or my family.

The second reason I would like to bring to the table is the amount of recent active shooters in America. Each and every one of these is a horrible tragedy. But many of them could have been lessened, or even stopped before they got started by a trained individual with a firearm. If you will look most if not

all of these active shooter incidents have taken place in "Gun Free Zone." This letter is not to advocate the laws of just any person who has a gun to carry everywhere. But, when you take trained individuals, and you take away their tools, you make more victims. As officers we are trained to go toward gun fire, toward the danger. It is a reality that we all know and are willing to do. If passed, this bill would place that many more trained officers out in the public at all times, ready to respond.

As an example, a school is an area where guns are not allowed in most places in the country. Yet schools shootings are an act we see all too often. If an officer was picking up their child at the school or just happen to be there when the incident took place and he was unarmed that officer would not be able to respond accordingly. However, if an officer who is off duty is still permitted to carry their weapon this incident may be shut down.

In closing I would like to say that I understand that bad things will happen and not every bad thing can be stopped. Evil does live in our world and there is not stopping that fact. However, if we can plan for the best and keep all of our tools in the tool box then we can hope for the best outcome possible. Louis Pasteur said "Chance favors only the prepared mind." This is statement I live by in both my professional and personal life. That Ohio Peace Officer's Training Academy has prepared our minds, our departments continually check our weapons proficiency, and I think allow officers to carry the weapons they are trained to use puts all of us, citizens and officers, on the better side of chance.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

J. Ryan Conlon