

**Testimony of Sergeant Keith Larson  
Interested Party of HB 341  
January 27, 2016**

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Chairman Maag, Vice Chair Kunze, Ranking Member Slesnick, and members of the Ohio House State Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today as a proponent of House Bill 341. My name is Keith Larson and I am the Officer in charge of the Cleveland Police Impound lot. I have been a police officer in Cleveland since 1995. I have been in charge of the impound unit since 2008.

While I am an interested party to HB 341, there are aspects of the bill that will improve the relationship between towers and law enforcement in some major ways.

To begin, the bill would resolve a growing problem with private tow-away zone tows. SB 274 created new regulations governing private tow away-zones that are causing some of the tower to get out of the business. Many companies that previously performed these tows either no longer do so, or have not established the private tow-away zones in compliance with the new requirements. However, with no process in place to dispose of junk vehicles available to the towers, they do not want to have another car on their lot with no way to dispose of the vehicle. So cars on private property were not being picked up. As a result, private property owners often drag or push a car onto a public street causing it to be a police ordered tow. A police ordered tow causes our department to process the required paperwork, to take title and to dispose of the vehicle.

**Moving abandoned vehicles to public streets is a public safety issue, and a strain on police resources.**

By allowing for a salvage title process for the towers it creates another incentive for towing companies to properly establish and perform private tow-away zone tows as intended without additional burdens being placed on law enforcement or vehicles being dragged on to public property causing a law enforcement action. Titles to vehicles ordered into storage by the Cleveland Police Department are transferred into the Chief of Police's name. Those cars may be sold at auction, used for undercover work, or destroyed. The process used by CPD in general takes 21 days to acquire a title for vehicles we impound, with proper notification to owners and leinholders in accordance with state law and city ordinances.

Currently the private towing and storage company does not have a similar process; but HB 341 would create a salvage title process, marked "for destruction" to properly dispose of abandoned vehicles.

In addition to police ordered tows of abandoned vehicles, police also order tows for accident vehicles and the vehicles of people who have been arrested. In all 3 instances the City has a contract with private towers to perform towing services in accordance with requirements established by city ordinance. HB 341 will recognize these municipal contracts with towers, including, for example, Cleveland Tow fees currently set by city ordinance:

- \$175 for arrests with a \$30 impound fee and Daily Storage
- \$125 for accident or abandoned vehicle with \$30 impound fee and Daily Storage
- \$50 for a stolen vehicle with a \$10 impound fee and Daily Storage fees are also different.

Municipalities establish these contracts with towing companies to ensure a quality level of service from contract towers. By entering into a contract with Cleveland, towers are required to respond to each scene in 30 minutes or less, they are required to have light and heavy duty equipment, they are required to carry \$1,000,000 of insurance and they need to be licensed by the city—both the company and the individual drivers.

House Bill 341 will allow the city of Cleveland to continue to demand a higher level of service by acknowledging that cities may pass ordinances and operate under contracts with tow companies.

Finally, HB 341 recognizes the difference between a police ordered tow and a private tow-away zone tow. As mentioned in earlier testimony, there are 3 types of police ordered tows. Abandoned vehicles, accidents and arrests. Abandoned vehicles do not have anyone coming to pick them up. Claims adjustors investigate and assess accident vehicles during regular business hours. And cars impounded due to an arrest requires a police release. Due to the centralized dispatching many jurisdictions can only release a vehicle during regular work hours. HB 341 would allow police lots and private lots doing only consensual tows and police tows to close overnight. This is a reasonable correction to an oversight in current law that allows businesses to protect their employees.

In summation, HB 341 will encourage towers to continue to pick up abandoned vehicles by allowing for salvage titles, and it will not disrupt current contracts with towers and cities across the state.

Thank you for your time today, I am available to answer questions.