

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Johnson and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on behalf of House Bill 38, which will expand the offense of aggravated murder, increase the penalty for felonious assault and require a mandatory prison term as it relates to offenses against first responders and military personnel.

My name is Allison Conner and House Bill 38 is very close to my heart for a few reasons. First, I am the daughter of an amazing, well-known, retired Whitehall Police Officer with over 35 years on the job. Growing up, he always raised my sister and I to stand up in what we believe. In August of 2001, my whole perspective changed. Two friends, and fellow officer of my father's, were shot in the line of duty. Officer Eric Brill suffered injuries to his face, losing an eye. This incident was the last that Officer Brill would encounter in his LEO career. Officer McDowell, whose widow, Angela McDowell, is here today, lost his life after being shot multiple times, all because they went to serve a warrant. Getting the call from my mother was mortifying. She was hysterical, and at that time, I didn't know if my father had been hurt. Since then, especially in more recent years, Officers, First Responders, and Service Members have been a major focus of attack.

Secondly, I have been a Navy Wife for almost 11 years now. My husband, Petty Officer First Class, has been serving active duty in the Navy since 2001. He will reach 16 years of his amazing career this coming July. He has been deployed a total of 8 times since his career began.

July 16, 2015, 24-year-old Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez opened fire on two military installations on Chattanooga, TN. He first committed a drive-by shooting at a recruiting center, then traveled to a U.S Navy Reserve Center and continued firing, where he was killed by police in a gunfight. Sadly, four Marines died on the spot. Two other service members and a police officer were also injured.

Shortly after that incident, a civilian group wanted to stand watch, armed, outside my husband's recruiting station here in Columbus. These men stood there, relentlessly during working hours to guard and protect this office and the service members inside. There are zero security measures that are in place for these recruiting stations and offices that are NOT located on a military base. My husband and his co-workers had been warned by the command that these military offices could be the focus of an attack, especially after the incident in Tennessee. Since the military was the focus of an ISIS group located in Columbus during this time, my husband, myself, and our children were at risk. His command ordered them and their families not to wear any type of military clothing, accessories, etc. out in public to prevent from putting a target on our backs. Why does it even get to this point? This group had surveillance on the Navy recruiting station in Dublin. The ISIS group had a van outside the office with so much camera equipment and plans for their attack. My husband didn't work in that particular office, but was there on a weekly basis. People who plan these attacks need to know that punishment will be severe, even if they were caught prior to the attack. Knowing how far this group was planning to take their

attack, I am astonished that, at the time, their punishment wouldn't have been as intense as House Bill 38 would have made it.

My husband is a trained shooter with the military and also has his concealed to carry license. Per the Navy, he is NOT allowed to carry while in uniform. If service members are not stationed on a military base, what kind of protection do they have? No ID checks or vehicle searches unless you are going onto a base. So, not only can they not protect themselves, but anyone could walk into that office and open fire. So what would happen next? A trivial punishment? A group of people that make it their mission to attack these heroes?

Police Officers, First Responders, and Military Members are amongst the bravest men and women that this Nation is beyond blessed to have. This bills, House Bill 38, is something that should have been implemented many, many years ago. To assault or murder on of these heroes is a crime that deserves much more than a slap on the wrist. These courageous men and women put their lives on the line every single day to protect ours and this Great Nation. We need this bill. First Responders, LEOs, and Military Personnel, active and retired, need this bill. As Ohioans, we need to put our foot down and do this for them. Look how much they do for us on a daily basis.

Let this bill go into effect. Make this a crime punishable by death. Make this bill show these animals that this crime is one of the most severe anyone could commit. We should be protecting our protectors and getting them justice when justice is due.

Thank you again for the chance to speak today. I am truly grateful.