



**State Representatives
John Patterson & Sarah LaTourette**

House Bill 318
Sponsor Testimony
House Education and career Readiness Committee
October 10, 2017

Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and distinguished members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 318, legislation that would define basic qualifications and responsibilities of school resource officers. While current law does allow school districts throughout Ohio to hire school resource officers (SROs), Ohio law lacks basic requirements for how SROs are trained and does not clearly identify even basic responsibilities.

As this esteemed body is already aware, in 2012 the City of Chardon was struck by tragedy. A student opened fire at Chardon High School just as school was starting, leaving three students dead and two others injured. What some of you may not know is that Chardon's football coach, Frank Hall, heroically chased the shooter out of the school, preventing further casualties. Coach Hall saved innocent lives that day and is regarded in the Chardon area today as a legendary hero. Not long after the shooting, the Coach Hall Foundation was established with this mission: "to provide effective means to protect against school violence and improve the quality of life in our school communities."

The Coach Hall Foundation approached Rep. LaTourette and I this year with the proposal you see before you today. They believe that in order for SROs to effectively protect students the state must establish at least a base level standard for school districts to follow when they choose to hire SROs. We believe it is important to have a certain degree of uniformity throughout the state, however, existing SROs would be grandfathered in under our proposal, but going forward SROs and school districts must follow our common sense guidelines.

Should HB 318 become law, SROs must complete a training program approved by the Ohio Peace Officer's Training Commission as well as an additional 40 hours of training that includes instruction regarding skills, tactics, and strategies including:

- School campus design, school building security needs and characteristics;

- The nuances of law enforcement functions conducted inside a school environment, including understanding the psychological and physiological characteristics consistent with the ages of the students in the assigned building or buildings, de-escalation techniques, and behavior management strategies;
- The mechanics of being a positive role model for youth, including informal counseling techniques;
- Classroom management techniques to provide law-related education to students and methods for managing the behaviors sometimes associated with educating children with special needs;
- The laws regarding compulsory attendance, as set forth in Chapter 3321 of the Revised Code; and
- Identifying the trends in drug use, eliminating the instance of drug use, and encouraging a drug-free environment in schools.

HB 318 also establishes that SROs have the authority to do the following:

- Carry a firearm;
- Make arrests and detain individuals found violating the law within the limits of their jurisdiction;
- Conduct a search or seizure of a person or property when there is probable cause that the person has committed or is committing a criminal offense;
- Assist with the adoption and implementation of a school's emergency management plan in consultation with local law enforcement officials and first responders;
- Carry out any additional responsibilities assigned under the employment engagements, contract, or memorandum of understanding, including but not limited to:
 - Providing a safe learning environment;
 - Providing valuable resources to school staff members;
 - Fostering positive relationships with students and staff;
 - Developing strategies to resolve problems affecting youth and protecting all students.

We all agree that safety is of the utmost importance for all of our citizens, but it is especially important that we take every possible step that we can to ensure the safety of our schools. We believe HB 318 is an important common sense step toward that goal.

Thank you for your attention. We would be glad to answer any questions or address any concerns the committee may have.