

Good morning. My name is Renee Rogers.

My husband, John Gisclon, a lieutenant with the Ashland County Sheriff's Department, was ambushed, shot and killed on January 14, 1995, by a man with a history of mental illness. I was 30 years old. Our daughters were four and one.

John was a veteran of the Sheriff's Department with nearly 22 years service and had served his country faithfully in Vietnam. He was respected in our community and dedicated to protecting law and order.

John was a fair and honest cop...the first to fearlessly jump in when the situation was dangerous and the first to show compassion when compassion was warranted. He didn't stand a chance that night because Bobby Staton had set out to kill a cop.

Representative Patton, I know you understand the emptiness we survivors feel. It's especially bad this time of year as we sit around our holiday tables with family, realizing that empty space will never be filled. We move forward, but the emptiness remains.

I pray the rest of you have ever lost a loved one in such a senseless, horrific manner and had to endure the publicity surrounding it. I pray you have not listened to your child's cries of "da, da, da, da, da" from her crib or endured father-daughter dances, first dates, graduations, weddings and grandchildren without your child's father. Nearly 24 years later, Megan, Lisa and I are still paying the price for John's death.

Today, my friends and I put on our game faces and summon the courage to testify in front of your committee, praying we can hold it all together and knowing our husbands' deaths have toughened us in ways we never expected.

Our pain is deep.

It is real.

It doesn't go away.

Ever.

It fuels our fight for what is right...the fight for affordable health insurance and updated pension benefits we survivors deserve. We challenge you and the Great State of Ohio to financially honor the sacrifices of men and women like my John.

While this entire bill is dear to me, the provision allowing survivors to purchase reasonably-priced health insurance is key.

As a deputy, John was a county employee who fell under the OPERS retirement system. Initially, my health insurance premium was covered through OPERS, with a small

monthly premium for Megan and Lisa: John's two "orphans". However, beginning in 2015, due to changes within OPERS, I faced skyrocketing monthly premiums for individual medical coverage, monthly premiums that jumped from \$48 a month in 2015 to more than \$1,300 a month in 2019.

Am. SB 296 would afford me and other line-of-duty surviving spouses and their dependent children a comprehensive health insurance package at the monthly premium of a state employee until we become medicare eligible.

Since 1999 (four years after John's death), my OPERS pension has been 50% of John's ending salary. In 2019, If I were to opt for OPERS group medical insurance, I would have just \$231.47 left from my pension for the entire YEAR! Instead, I have been forced to find catastrophic-only coverage with a \$7,900 deductible.

The provision in this bill to calculate line-of-duty pensions at 75% rather than 50% of the officer's ending salary at 33 years will make a substantial difference in survivors' budgets going forward and bring the pension for line-of-duty survivors in line with pensions afforded disabled officers.

I am also excited for the passage of Senate Bill 296 because of the provision to extend the retirement timeline to 33 years. While this step will not benefit me directly, it is a step that is long-overdue. My pension was reduced by 50% as my children turned 5 and 8 years old. This is wrong...and should never again happen to a surviving family. If John had lived, he would not have retired at 25 years with two small children. He was 46 years old and healthy when he died with ambitions to run for sheriff. Our family lost the opportunity for increased income as well as any overtime and special pay income he would have received. His ending salary certainly does not reflect where his career would have taken him.