
PROPONENT TESTIMONY, OFFICER MIKE SHAW, CHARDON POLICE
DEPARTMENT
Sub. House Bill 318

22 MAY 2018 / 2:30 PM / FINANCE HEARING ROOM / OHIO STATEHOUSE

Good afternoon Chairman Oelslager Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the House Finance Committee. I want to start by thanking you for providing me the privilege of sharing my testimony in support of Substitute House Bill 318. My name is Mike Shaw and I am a police officer in the city of Chardon, Ohio which is located in Geauga County. I have been a police officer for 23 years and, more importantly, assigned as the School Resource Officer for the Chardon City Schools for the past 6 years.

What exactly does it mean to be a “School Resource Officer”? Well, until the idea of House Bill 318, there really was no right or wrong answer to that question. A school or a police department could use that title however they saw fit. The title has been used to describe unarmed, private security personnel in schools as well as police officers assigned strictly for law enforcement on school campuses. Being a School Resource Officer myself, I have formed my own definition of what the title means. I believe that House Bill 318 reflects this very important distinction. School Resource Officers are much more than just “cops” in the schools. They are men and women of the badge that are expected to, rather required to, perform a plethora of duties within our State’s schools.

All police officers in Ohio, even those assigned to our schools, are first and foremost sworn to enforce our laws and bring criminals before our courts - they are all law enforcement officers. The distinction between a School Resource Officer and other police officers, though, can be found in the numerous, additional responsibilities that they hold within our school buildings. On any given day, a School Resource Officer can be called upon to investigate criminal activity, help draft emergency response plans, design an educational program for students, play a game of kickball, be interviewed by a teenager for a school project, evaluate building security issues, discuss current teen trends with parents, interview students alongside school administration, maybe even be a shoulder for a student to cry on. And, if they’re lucky enough, be called upon to dance with the school’s dance team during a home basketball game.

While all police officers should strive to be community-oriented and approachable, the School Resource Officer is expected to embody this philosophy at all times. I worked on the road as a general police officer for nearly 17 years before taking the position as Chardon’s first School Resource Officer. It is because of making this transition myself that I can attest to the importance of specialized training for School Resource Officers. There really is a culture shock when you go from road patrol to hallway patrol. The training criteria presented within House Bill 318 will help acclimate an officer to the school environment. It will give them an idea of what to expect as well as provide some basic tools that can and will be used on an almost daily basis. Just as

other positions within a police department require, just by their nature, some sort of specialized training, so, too does the position of School Resource Officer.

While creating a standardized training curriculum for School Resource Officers is important, so is clarifying the definition of one. If a title is going to be used throughout our State's schools to identify a police officer in those schools, it is important that when the words "School Resource Officer" are used, we all know what that means. We will know that it means a sworn, armed law enforcement officer that has been properly trained and knows what to expect from the assignment to the school. We will know that it is an officer that accepts the immense responsibility that comes with protecting, educating, and helping the youth of Ohio. The meaning of the words "School Resource Officer" will finally have one, unambiguous, State-wide meaning.

The addition of appropriating funds to House Bill 318 will help to facilitate the important aspects of the bill, specifically the School Resource Officer training. With funding available, schools and police departments will find it more feasible to get their officers properly trained before assigning them to our school buildings. This important addition should help to make Ohio a leader in our nation when it comes to not only protecting our youth, but showing that we can all come together to support this most important agenda. House Bill 318 embodies the important idea of providing our students and school staff with a qualified, trained, prepared, and, most importantly, friendly and approachable police officer. I support Substitute House Bill 318 and believe that it will be the first step in many that Ohio will take to ensure the safety and security of our schools, students, and communities.

Thank for your time. I sincerely urge you to support this crucial step in protecting Ohio's children and Ohio's future.