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William Houk, President
Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association
House Bill 38 Proponent Testimony
Senate Judiciary Committee
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Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 38. My name is Bill Houk, and I am a retired fire chief from Jefferson Township with 34 years of service. I am also the current President of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association. The OFCA exists to improve the safety of Ohio by leading, representing, educating, and supporting Ohio's fire chiefs and emergency services. As a coalition of Ohio's fire service leadership, the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association offers our support of House Bill 38.

House Bill 38 would expand professionals covered under current state law for aggravated murder. Current law in Ohio only includes state law enforcement officers. The inclusion of firefighters, EMTs, and members of the military is a needed change as law enforcement officers are not the only people that put themselves in harm's way on a daily basis, nor are they the only people targeted.

In the wake of active aggressor type incidents, firefighters and EMTs are being trained in Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) and Rescue Task Forces (RTFs). What this means is, while law enforcement officials are responding to and neutralizing the active aggressor(s), firefighters and EMTs are forming RTFs with additional law enforcement protection, entering the "warm" zone of the hostile area to find, treat and remove surviving victims. Even though the RTFs have law enforcement protection and are not entering the "hot" zone, these teams are still placing themselves at risk to save as many lives as possible.

There have been incidents across the United States where firefighters and EMTs have been shot, shot at and held hostage while performing their duties. Ohio is no different. We recently saw a situation occur in Youngstown in December 2016 where shots were fired at a firetruck, striking one firefighter in the leg. Two others were lucky to just have bullets rip through their jackets and miss everything else.

Thank you for allowing me to testify on House Bill 38. On behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association, I would encourage your support of the bill, and would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.