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State Representative Rick Perales

Ohio's 73rd House District: Western Portion of Greene County

**Judiciary Committee
House Bill 405 Counterfeiting
Sponsor Testimony
May 15th, 2018**

Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB 405 which specifically establishes counterfeiting as a crime in Ohio law.

The Opioid Epidemic has devastated our loved ones and communities. There are few Ohioans who have not been touched by this travesty, either directly or indirectly through family, friends, and neighbors. At the heart of this epidemic is the underground economy that puts illegal money making schemes over the welfare of our communities. Many may not realize that this issue floods Ohio with counterfeit currency by criminals that recognize the absence of a criminally enforceable law prohibiting such acts. I am here today to bring our fight against the Opioid Epidemic to the next level, by attacking the financial source.

The U.S. Secret Service, the federal law enforcement entity tasked with investigating federal counterfeiting crimes and enforcing the federal laws pertaining to counterfeiting, brought the need for this bill to my attention. Secret Service Resident Agent in Charge Kevin Dye and I have been working this issue for well over a year. At that time, the Secret Service informed me at that Ohio was

one of only ten states that do not have statutes that specifically addressed counterfeiting. Additionally, the U.S. Secret Service has seen a significant increase in counterfeit crimes, especially those directly linked to narcotics cases in Ohio. Agent Dye estimates more than 85% of counterfeiting investigations in Ohio are tied to illicit drug activity.

With the advent of technology, counterfeiting that once took tens of thousands of dollars of equipment can now be done with a home printer. With the dramatic increase in the volume of counterfeiting crimes, Ohio needs to do its part. This new law will set the standard for violations of manufacturing U.S. Currency and Credit/Debit Cards. HB 405 will clearly identify criminal conduct associated with counterfeiting, significantly aiding Ohio Law Enforcement Officers and Deputies, and reducing the charging irregularities that currently exist throughout the State. This law will also give Ohio prosecutors the ability to directly and accurately charge criminals who inject this fake currency into our economy.

I have been in contact with several law enforcement agencies as I was developed this legislation. There has been overwhelming support from the Ohio Attorney General's Office, the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio, the Ohio Department of Public Safety, and the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police.

This legislation addresses the urgent health disaster that is Ohio's Opioid Epidemic. We must make a difference for the thousands of families affected by this tragedy. We must address it from all fronts- Prevention, Enforcement, Treatment, and Post-Addiction Care. This bill will address the previously untapped

prevention aspect of counterfeiting. That is why I am calling on the legislature to open up this new offensive in the War on Drugs. This legislation will hit the illicit drug trade where it hurts the most – their wallets, while keeping counterfeit funds out of Ohio’s economy. Let us work together with our state law enforcement and support our Federal counterparts in the U.S. Secret Service, and end Opioid’s foothold in our Ohio communities.

Most recently, my wife and I were invited by Director Rodolph Alles, the Director of the Secret Service, to attend the Director’s Impact Award ceremony in Washington, DC. Agent Dye and his colleagues from the Dayton Field Office received the award due to their work on House Bill 405; a productive and unique collaboration between our state and federal government in making sure we hold criminals in our state accountable for their crimes.

Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB 405. I will be glad to answer any questions.