



PERRYSBURG TOWNSHIP
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H.B. 539 Proponent Testimony: Lieutenant J. Matthew Gazarek

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 539. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank the bill's authors Representatives Ghanbari and Blair for their support of law enforcement officers across the State of Ohio.

For more than 18 years, I've been honored to serve the citizens, businesses and visitors of Perrysburg Township as a law enforcement officer with the Perrysburg Township Police Department in Wood County. Promoted to operations lieutenant in 2015, I remain engaged on a daily basis with our road patrol officers, our detective bureau and K9 units. Prior to my current employment I served as a Deputy Sheriff for two years at the Seneca County Sheriff's Office under Sheriffs H. Weldin Neff and Tom Steyer, and one year under Sheriff Michael Heldman at the Hancock County Sheriff's Office.

The legislative process has resulted in numerous meetings here in Columbus in an effort to find a reasonable compromise between the interested parties. I would like to acknowledge and thank The Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association, The Department of Public Safety, The Ohio State Highway Patrol, The Fraternal Order of the Police, The Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, and The Ohio Townships Association and the many others for their investment in this process. House Bill 539 is a bill we can all say is a fair compromise. The passage of this bill would ensure the ability for Township Police Departments meeting the requirements set forth in the legislation, the full authority to ensure the safety of the motoring public on the interstates within our jurisdiction while also enforcing the laws under the Ohio Revised Code.

It's important to note that certified law enforcement officers throughout Ohio must adhere to the same training and education no matter the agency or size of the community in which they serve; township officers are no exception.

In 2014 I was asked to become an instructor for the Drug Interdiction Assistance Program, and subsequently have taught many officers, troopers and deputies throughout the United States. Representative Ghanbari has ridden on countless occasions with law enforcement officers to listen and learn about the challenges we face. The facts are clear that more Americans are struggling with addiction to narcotics, and there are increases in crimes regarding fraudulent credit cards and forgery, thefts from our local retail areas, impaired driving, and human, sex and criminal trafficking. As Township Police Officers we can help combat and deter those coming into and through our areas to commit crimes against all of our citizens. Today, with your support, it is time for all of the law enforcement community to work together, hand in hand without any restrictions or reservations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.