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Testimony in Opposition to the Elimination of the Front Plate in House Bill 62

Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee

Colonel Richard Fambro

Chairman McColley, Vice-Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee, I am Colonel Rick Fambro with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and I am here with my law enforcement partners to testify against the proposed elimination of the front license plate.

I have served with the Patrol for over 28 years and have personally witnessed on countless occasions the value of the front plate. In order to avoid duplicate testimony, my law enforcement partners and I have coordinated our testimony here today. I will concentrate my testimony on the importance of the front plate as it pertains to crash investigations and passing stopped school bus violations.

Children are Ohio's most precious assets. In order to protect them from possible harm, the General Assembly passed a law prohibiting motor vehicles from passing stopped school buses when receiving or discharging children. To further demonstrate the importance of actually enforcing these violations, the General Assembly enacted Ohio Revised Code 4511.751 which mandates bus drivers report violations to law enforcement. The Revised Code also specifically states, "**the law enforcement agency shall conduct an investigation to attempt to determine or confirm the identity of the operator at the time of the alleged violation.**" This language is not permissive, it is a requirement. Eliminating the front plate makes it virtually impossible to effectively execute our statutory duty to determine the identity of the offender.

A front plate is instrumental for identification and prosecution of these infractions. Bus drivers almost exclusively utilize the front plate to identify violators and report them to law enforcement officials. Additionally, many buses are currently being equipped with video monitoring cameras which capture these violations. The Highway Patrol alone successfully locates and charges over 600 offenders annually. Without the front plate, law enforcement will lack the tools to investigate, charge and discourage this dangerous behavior.

With respect to crash investigations, the front plate is another important tool especially as it relates to hit-skip crashes. In nearly all hit-skip crashes, the hit-skip driver inflicts monetary damages and or bodily injuries on an unsuspecting victim and then flees the crash scene in the suspect vehicle. A front plate doubles the chances that witnesses can identify the fleeing vehicle as opposed to a vehicle with only one rear plate.

Additionally, many hit-skip crashes involve a suspect vehicle rear-ending another vehicle or in other cases, the suspect vehicle travels off the roadway and damages private property. Unfortunately for the perpetrator, many times they leave a valuable piece of evidence at the scene, the front plate. Every year troopers and other law

enforcement officials routinely solve hit-skip crashes because of the front plate. These are instances where without the front plate, these crimes would simply go unsolved and innocent victims would be left uncompensated for medical bills and/or property damage.

Another benefit of the front plate is the ability to aid in the location of crashed vehicles that have traveled off the roadway at night. The front plate is covered with a highly reflective coating that allows first responders to quickly locate vehicles, and in some cases, provide emergency care. The requirement of a front plate doubles the chances that a reflective license plate will catch the eye of a first responder.

These are just a couple of the benefits that law enforcement gleans from the front plate requirement. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify and look forward to any questions you might have at the conclusion of the panel's testimony.