December 10, 2019

The Honorable Senator Rob McColley, Chair
Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Senator McColley,

I would like to offer testimony as a proponent of keeping the front license plate on Ohio registered vehicles. I would like to thank Senators Uecker and Hottinger for introducing this important legislation.

I am currently in my 39th year as a law enforcement and public safety professional. In all of those years we have asked our partners in the Ohio General Assembly to assist us in protecting our citizens and their property in many ways. One of these ways is with the continued use of a front license plate. In my 24 ½ years with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and as a 39 + year law enforcement officer, currently serving as Stark County Sheriff, there have been countless times I've been able to identify stolen vehicles and other criminal activity by being able to view the vehicle registration from the front plate.

Please allow me to share a recent case we handled at the Stark County Sheriff's Office where a female was violently abducted from a discount store by her estranged boyfriend. The case was quickly solved and the suspect arrested after a surveillance camera captured the front plate registration from the suspect's vehicle as he fled the scene. Without this critical information this victim may have suffered serious harm and possibly death!
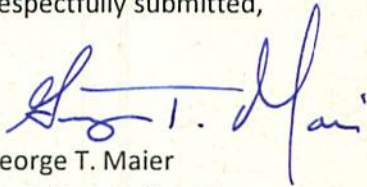
In another case, just a few short years ago a Stark County woman was viciously gunned down and killed by her ex-husband in the parking lot of a nursing home where she was employed and leaving work after her shift. The suspect was on the run from law enforcement with little information available related to his direction of travel. The suspect was spotted and apprehended on IS77 southbound 65 miles south of Stark County. The apprehension was the direct result of a State Trooper identifying the suspect by the front license plate of his vehicle as he attempted to flee the state. The apprehension led to his arrest and conviction for the murder of his ex-wife.

There have been numerous cases solved and leads obtained by using plate recognition technology. The removal of the front plate from Ohio vehicles will impede the efforts of law enforcement officers and take away their ability to identify suspects by 50%. Statistics show that motor vehicles are involved in 70% of all serious crimes in the U.S.

I urge our law makers to reconsider removal of the front license plate and do the right thing by making the safety of Ohioans a priority!

Respectfully submitted,

George T. Maier
Stark County Sheriff

GTM/fkv