

Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee – thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony regarding HB 132.

Ohio towing and recovery companies are a vital part of public safety services and are routinely called by law enforcement and public safety officials to respond to accidents and emergencies to clear Ohio roads and highways. Wrecked or abandoned vehicles that pose a public safety threat must be cleared from the roadways and public property, towed to a storage facility and stored to be recovered by the owner or lienholder. The proposed legislation deals directly and only with vehicles that are ordered into storage by law enforcement or public safety entities.

In many cases, these vehicles are abandoned at storage facilities across Ohio because they have little to no value. Thousands of vehicles are abandoned every year and towing and storage companies have no recourse to acquire the vehicle's title and properly dispose of them. Currently, local chiefs of police or county sheriffs are required to spend time and resources to notify the vehicle owners/lienholders that failure to claim the vehicle may result in loss of vehicle title. Law enforcement is also solely responsible for acquiring the vehicle's title and disposing of the vehicle if it is ultimately abandoned.

However, if a law enforcement entity does not process the title and follow through disposing of the vehicle, the towing and storage companies must keep the vehicles in their lots without end, with no recourse to dispose of the vehicle properly, or recover any cost associated with providing the public service of recovering, towing and storing the vehicle. HB 345 will create a process that enables towing and storage companies the ability to acquire the titles to these abandoned vehicles if the law enforcement entities decide not to process the vehicle.

HB 345 will deem vehicles abandoned sixty days after the vehicle owner and/or lienholder are notified by law enforcement. This time period provides the law enforcement entity ample time to decide if they would like to acquire the vehicle title for disposal or any purpose they deem necessary. The legislation will not modify the current process law enforcement may utilize to acquire the vehicle's title in any way, and they may continue to do so as they deem necessary. However, if the law enforcement entity chooses not to do so, Ohio towing and recovery companies need a method to properly dispose of the thousands of vehicles that are currently piling up in lots across the state, because there is no current recourse for proper disposal.

Last year, we worked closely with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, The Buckeye State Sheriff's Association, the Ohio Chiefs of Police Association, the Ohio County Clerks Association, and the Association of Professional Towing – Ohio (APTO) to craft the legislation before you today that made it out of the House last GA as HB 345. All interested parties recognize the problem that now-HB 132 addresses and support the solution. Working together, our main objectives are to ensure the legislation does not infringe on the duties and responsibilities of Ohio law enforcement entities, abandoned vehicles can be disposed of properly, and that the solution is agreeable to all interested parties. HB 132 accomplishes these goals.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I would be happy to answer any questions