



OPPOSITION TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 472

Keary McCarthy

May 24, 2022

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, I am writing today on behalf of the Ohio Mayors Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's largest cities. The Ohio Mayors Alliance opposes HB 472 because it has the potential to drastically raise costs to cities and harm recruitment and retention of first responders.

HB 472 would dramatically alter the qualified immunity available to city police officers, firefighters, and EMS personnel. We are not unsympathetic to the goal of ensuring that motorists who are impacted by property loss or damages caused by municipal first responder conduct are reimbursed, but this bill is not the correct way to address that issue. The solutions proposed here would increase insurance and liability costs and push cities into more consistent and recurrent litigation. It is not clear that such a drastic change would benefit residents of Ohio's cities and other municipalities, either, if additional tax revenue would need to be raised to fund such liabilities.

We are aware of no research of any kind on the fiscal impacts this change would have on Ohio cities and in turn, Ohioans. It would thus be imprudent to enact HB 472 without undergoing a thorough study of its impacts on city budgets and police and fire department recruitment, hiring, and retention, and municipal insurance costs. Moreover, adding to Ohio cities' fiscal burdens without funding those costs through an appropriation will necessarily make it more difficult for cities to adequately fund their first responders. Public safety expenditures already account for, on average, over half of cities' budgets. Cities must be sure that their police officers and first responders are able to perform their jobs without fear of financial ruin. Cities need consistent, ongoing revenue to pay for public safety and essential city services. This bill would put all of that at risk without a clear idea of its impact or benefit. We ask that you vote against advancing HB 472.