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May 31, 2022

Chairman Hillyer

Members of the Committee:

Thank you for taking time to read my strong opposition to the proposed legislation. House Bill 472, if enacted, would unfairly place emergency responders into the cross hairs of legal defense costs, civil litigation, and subject communities to unpredictable civil action. As a Chief of Police, I take this very seriously and feel that this is a dangerous path forward for our Legislature to take.

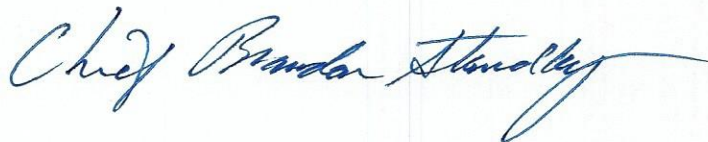
Law enforcement officers patrol Ohio's highways and byways each and every day, with trust and legitimacy in mind. They are trusted with traveling millions of total miles each year within our state's boundaries, achieving safe results in their duties. In a high percentage of the time, emergency response to calls is dictated by the urgent needs of the situation at hand. When first responders are traveling as fast as possible, within laws and policies, this helps get the best results of intervening sooner in any particular situation. Officers patrol our neighborhoods, our parks, our schools, and everywhere in-between. They are dependable and highly visible. Sometimes, accidents can occur. As most drivers understand, that's the inherent risk of driving at all. It's a higher risk when you are in a very visible vehicle with lights and siren. Even when it is not an emergency response, just driving a highly visible vehicle can cause other drivers to react differently. Sure, even first responders can have poor judgment or poor reaction. This should not mean that their livelihood is then put at risk.

When unfortunate circumstances arise, and a first responder is involved in a crash while on duty, they are held to internal policies and laws. Since they are on duty, they are normally seen driving their jurisdiction's-owned vehicles. Normally, police cruisers are very visible and obvious. They meet State standards. Likewise, officers must complete additional training in the academy to graduate any certified academy in Ohio. However; even with ongoing training, it is predictable that sooner or later, a trained law enforcement officer will be involved in a collision. This should not mean that they are then personally liable for what occurs during the crash. If a

motorist is at-fault, they are normally cited in most cases and insurance companies handle the rest. If a law enforcement officer is at-fault, they can also be cited and the government entity's insurance normally pays the victim(s) damages. Certainly, individual circumstances can always be at play in each scenario that plays out across our State. No matter what, the constant is that the officer, deputy, or trooper was on duty at the time. Why would the individual law enforcement officer, deputy, or trooper be individually and personally responsible for paying for this when this occurred on duty? This isn't about pointing fingers at this point. Instead, if this legislation passes, we will see an enormous number of officers leave the job. They would not feel supported, and surely not be able to afford the civil penalties if anyone can simply sue them because an accident occurred.

The burdens that come with being a law enforcement officer are enormous. The challenges keep coming in today's society. When I first learned of this proposed legislation, I thought I was reading an advertisement for a law firm. That is exactly who benefits in this legislation. It's not the person who may be then legally able to file suit, but it would be the attorneys making millions on the backs of public servants. That's what makes this intently wrong. Let's not pretend that this helps Ohioans. That's simply not true. This burdens all citizens with affording safety and security when no one else would ever sign up to be a first responder knowing this about our laws.

Simply put, this is a large step into a deep hole of "no turning back" should it pass. Let's support all Ohioans, and vote NO.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chief Brandon Stendley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.