



**Representative Jeff LaRe**  
**77<sup>th</sup> House District**

**Representative Shane Wilkin**  
**91<sup>st</sup> House District**

**House Bill 22 Sponsor Testimony**

Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 22. This piece of legislation seeks to expand the definition of obstruction of justice in state statute by including “failure to follow a lawful order from a law enforcement officer or diverting a law enforcement officer’s attention”.

Events that have transpired over the course of these past several months have demonstrated a necessity to amend our state’s obstruction of justice law that will further protect law enforcement officers and members of the general public. Peaceful protests have turned violent when bad actors who are not involved in a police matter begin to taunt, harass, and overall interfere with law enforcement officers performing their duties. Under current law, ORC 2903.13, an assault

involves knowingly, attempting, and/or recklessly causing serious physical harm.<sup>1</sup>

If the victim of an assault is a law enforcement officer while they are carrying out their duties, the assault may lead to serious criminal charges. The provisions of House Bill 22 would further protect our law enforcement officers by including taunting or striking, throwing objects, failing to follow a lawful order, and inhibiting or depriving a law enforcement officer of control over a detainee to what constitutes an obstruction of justice, and ties penalties for a violation to the current penalties found under the state's obstruction of justice law.

The intent of this bill is not to infringe upon individuals' freedom of speech and assembly, and we both support these rights and believe they are fundamental for our republic. However, violence is not a protected right and should not be tolerated. The provisions of what constitutes an obstruction of justice found in the bill will create a deterrent on actions that escalate situations into violence by making it a punishable crime to interfere in the duties of a law enforcement officer after a lawful order is given.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 22. We are happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

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<sup>1</sup> "2903.13 Assault," *LAWriter-Ohio Laws and Rules*, last accessed February 17, 2021, <https://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2903.13v1>