

Dear Chairperson LeRd, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and Committee Members,

Thank you for receiving my written testimony in opposition to HB 22. As an Ohio resident and a teacher, I believe that this bill will silence the people of Ohio and criminalize free speech, preventing us from coming together and moving forward. I urge you not to support it.

Members of government should listen to their people—peaceful protest is an American right. Imagine how a bill like HB 22 would have been used by those who opposed the civil rights protestors of the 1960s as they marched across the bridge in Selma. Voting to support HB 22 would put you on the wrong side of history. To support free speech and the constitutional right to assemble, you must vote down HB 22.

Moreover, this bill is entirely unnecessary. Drivers, pedestrians and property owners are already protected; law enforcement already has the tools necessary to respond to violent criminals and vigilantes; and Ohio prosecutors already have the means to prosecute violence or rioting. Introducing and advancing bills that create new crimes or place additional penalties into state law leads to overcrowded prisons costing taxpayers billions each year. As representatives of Ohioans, you must know—that is not what your constituents want. Do the right thing for Ohioans and do not support HB 22.