

Committee Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Sweringen, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. My name is Kelley Fox, I am Faith Organizer at the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and a resident of Grove City and I am submitting testimony against House Bill 22.

As a citizen of the state of Ohio, I believe that every person deserves to have their voice heard and have the right to peaceful protest. This bill represents another means of limiting a citizen's right to freedom of speech.

As someone with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, I know what it means to be distracted and it's not easy to do your job and be distracted. Despite that, I am expected to have the same level of poise, maturity, and productivity as those without ADHD. If I can continue to be a functioning member of society and work my multiple jobs on top of going to school without punishing people who distract me, then I don't believe that law enforcement officers should be able to charge people for distracting them on the job.

This bill feels like a conflation of a nuisance with abuse, and let me be clear, peaceful protest is not abuse. Peaceful protest is "the language of the unheard," as Martin Luther King said. By making peaceful protest restricted due to the "distraction" of officers, you are effectively silencing those who are already unheard, and that silencing is the real abuse.

The job of law enforcement officers is to protect the rights of the people, even in the midst of distraction. The real issue is police officers feel threatened by the marginalized who dare lift their voices against violence. Instead of continuing to silence the voices of the unheard, maybe we should consider addressing why officers are threatened by the people they swore to protect.

I am against the restriction of my first amendment rights. I am against anything that limits my ability to peacefully protest and make my voice heard. I am against any limitations that keep me and my community from being seen and heard when we face injustice.

Please vote no on House Bill 22.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kelley A. Fox