

I am submitting this, my first ever written testimony, and wish that I could speak with the members of Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee in person. However, like so many other concerned constituents, I am unable to come to the Statehouse due to the COVID pandemic. I am writing to you as a person of faith who is a retired teacher and therapist to share my concerns about HB 22 and its potential to damage not only the relationships between police officers and the communities they serve but also the reputations of our legislators who support its passage.

While HB 22 provides “solutions” for potential problems, these problems are not the ones that bombard citizens on the news each day. Our beloved country appears to be reaching a boiling point due to a variety of social injustices. I believe we all agree that much work must be done to address relations between officers of the law and people of color. However well-intentioned HB 22 may be, promoting ultra-strict penalties for violations that are minor crimes will give our legislators the appearance of being tone-deaf, even racist, to their constituents.

Ohio’s excellent law enforcement and criminal legal systems are already well equipped to keep the peace and punish those who break our existing laws. Going out of one’s way to create felons of concerned citizens is an action that will surely lead to expensive and embarrassing legal challenges for years to come. I trust that your committee will have the foresight not to fall into this trap. HB 22 and others like it will prove to be, not only unnecessary, but counter-productive and even damaging to you and your constituents in our great state of Ohio.