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**House Criminal Justice Committee
Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association
House Bill 109 Proponent Testimony**

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on House Bill 109.

House Bill 109, the Ohio Law and Order Act, would increase penalties for riot and aggravated riot when the offender causes damage to property or injury to another. It also creates the offense of riot assault that prohibits a person engaged in riot or aggravated riot from recklessly causing physical harm to another person. Most importantly to our fire fighters and EMS is the creation of the offense of bias motivated intimidation that prohibits a person from harming another person or property based on the victim's status as a first responder. This legislation would make anyone guilty of the offense of bias motivated intimidation a third-degree felony.

While we wish such legislation wasn't necessary, our first responders are finding themselves the target of citizens' anger and frustration. As we often need to respond to calls during riots and extreme protests, we are put in very dangerous situations while trying to provide assistance and care during these emergencies. We need to be able to perform our duties free of targeted attacks and hinderance.

House Bill 109 will provide greater protections for our first responders and help keep them safe while they serve our communities. We would like to thank Representatives Abrams and Carruthers and the committee for their work on this legislation.

Respectfully,

Stephen M. Kelly
OFCA Policy Committee, Chair