

April 19, 2021

Dear Criminal Justice Committee.

I am a voter in Montgomery County, Ohio. I am asking that you please consider this as my official testimony opposing HB 22, which could expand the offenses of “obstructing justice to include failure to follow a lawful order from a law enforcement officer or diverting a law enforcement officer’s attention”.

As an activist and protester, I understand that these laws increase potential for abuse by law enforcement and the criminal justice system. As worded, these laws will expose peaceful protestors and increase the potential consequences, especially if you are not a white person.

There are several issues I found with HB 22. Section 2921.32. (A) beginning on line nine and ending on line eleven, “prosecution, conviction or punishment of another crime or to assist another to benefit from the commission of a crime”. It is not in the job description for a police officer to prosecute, convict, or punish a person that is committing any law. If these police officers can perform any of these three mentioned actions, they are also doing a judge and juries’ job., which completely conflicts with our judiciary system.

Section 2921.32. (A6), lines twenty-eight through thirty-one, “prevent or obstruct any person, by means of force, intimidation, or deception, from performing any act to aid in the discovery, apprehension, or prosecution of the other person or child”. This is a very grey area; an officer could claim anything is obstruction if they prefer, based on what is written here. They could claim someone videoing them is somehow obstruction. There needs to be clear and concise indication of what is and is not obstruction. Lines twenty-eight through thirty-one leave this undefined and open for interpretation by officers. This is a potential for abuse.

The last issue I have with HB 22 is 2921.32. is (B1), line thirty-nine, “taunt or strike the law enforcement officer;”. This is a mistake that will be abused by officers. Officers are taunted all the time; it is part of what comes with working with the public. Teachers are taunted by their students, nurses by their patients, firefighters by the cats stuck in trees. If an officer cannot perform their job adequately because they are being taunted, are they going to be able to be a successful officer at all? If taunting is enough of a distraction that they cannot perform their tasks, should they be working with the public? Should we also arrest or charge children taunting each other on the playground?

Due to the many flaws in HB 22 and because I want to stop this slide into a police state, I strongly request that you oppose this bill from moving forward.

Sincerely,
Amanda Meyer