

The stated purpose of House Bill 22 is to expand the offense of obstructing justice to include “diverting a law enforcement officer's attention.” HB 22 would make the exercise of free speech and the right to assemble a felony if a police officer becomes “distracted” by yelling, chanting, or even throwing confetti. Ohio already has extensive laws protecting law enforcement officers and ensuring their safety. Restricting the right to peacefully protest in Ohio is unneeded, unwanted, and would dangerously silence the voices of constituents in this state.

Peaceful protests throughout history have successfully drawn the attention of officers and the public to bring about meaningful change for the good of the community. Women’s suffrage parades, Civil Rights sit-ins, clean water public witness events, the People’s Climate March, and protests against the killing of George Floyd and are all powerful examples of the crucial importance of Ohioans using their voices and gaining the attention of elected officials, the community, and law enforcement officials to guide the establishment of fair, just laws in our state.

As an Ohio voter, I stand strongly against these proposed restrictions to our First Amendment right to speak freely and the right of the people to peaceably assemble for a redress of grievances. I urge you to vote against House Bill 22.