



Youngstown Warren Black Caucus

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April 21, 2021

Chairman Jeff LaRae
Criminal Justice Committee
Ohio House of Representatives

Chairman LaRae,

The Youngstown Warren Black Caucus is a chapter of the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus representing the interests of African American Ohioans in the Mahoning Valley. We strongly reject the need for this legislation as well as the language proposed in Section (B) of the bill. This bill proposes that a citizen is obstructing justice if they divert the officer's attention while they are performing their duties. This language proposes that witnesses that may be pleading for someone's life as in a George Floyd situation or even if a bystander is warning an officer of some pending danger to the officer, that would be obstructing justice. The language also means that an officer can claim that someone who is recording the behavior of the law enforcement official can be deemed "obstructive" if the officer tells that person to leave or stop what they are doing. That is nowhere close to a just system.

As Ohio and the nation grapple with how to make criminal justice work for all of us we hope that you understand that proposed language like this only increases the splintered relationship between law enforcement and many communities. For many of us in the Black community, we are disappointed and offended that lawmakers are going in the opposite direction of much needed police reform. We strongly request legislators reject this bill and do not take it to the floor for a vote.

Sincerely,

Jaladah Aslam, President