

April 22, 2021

**Before the House Criminal Justice Committee**  
**Opponent Testimony House Bill 22**  
The Honorable Zack Reed

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, and Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today in strong opposition to House Bill 22, the bill to expand obstruction of justice charges and limit the people's right to peacefully protest.

It is no surprise freedom of speech is guaranteed by the first amendment of our nation's constitution. The experiment known as democracy — which has helped create the most powerful and incredible country in history — can only work when every citizen is free. Free to vote and free to speak out and stand up for what is right. Our ability to peacefully protest is innate and necessary in order for our country to thrive.

HB 22 is an unnecessary affront to democracy. Laws already give police what they need to arrest violent criminals. The idea of people peacefully speaking their minds and having their voices heard should be embraced, not criminalized.

HB 22 is an overreach to say the least. People finding themselves too close to a police officer could be arrested. Someone yelling or even talking to a police officer while making an arrest would be committing a crime. Even someone who, at the officer's discretion, is "annoying" them would be subject to criminal prosecution.

HB 22 sets a dangerous precedent and will only lead to more violations of our rights. I know this first hand. I recently attended a rally where people were standing against injustice and the death of George Floyd. Voices were loud, the event was large, but everyone was peaceful. When police ordered people to disperse, not everyone could hear them. Noise is an element of every peaceful protest, yet under HB 22 anyone not hearing those orders could be arrested and charged with a felony.

The provisions of HB 22 will create a criminal record for someone doing nothing more than standing up and exercising their constitutional rights. Imagine a young student with a promising future head of them arrested and charged with a felony under the overreaching policies of HB 22. Their prospects of securing a good job destroyed. Renting a decent place to

live just became that much more difficult — and for the rest of their lives they face the stigma of being a felon, simply because they were making their voices heard.

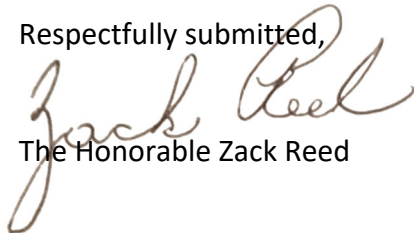
All of us deeply value the importance good police officers. We depend on them to faithfully protect and serve us every day. Law and order are vital to our society.

Unfortunately, soured by dangerous abuses of power, many in our communities have lost trust in our police forces. While we know good police officers will always strive to do what's best, the bad one's exploit every loophole to justify their dangerous actions. HB 22 will only lead to more abuses — abuses that tarnish the trust and standing of the good officers we depend on every day to keep us safe.

Violent protests can never be tolerated. Our police already have the laws needed to preserve order. HB 22 is a terrible bill. It is an affront to our fundamental rights. The passage of HB 22 will only create more problems, more unrest and needlessly harm people doing nothing more than standing up for their basic right to speak freely and have their voices heard.

For these reasons and others I urge you to oppose HB 22.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Zack Reed". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

The Honorable Zack Reed