

Testimony on House Bill 22
House Criminal Justice Committee
April 20, 2021

Submitted by: Joanie Calem

Chair LaRe, Rep. Wilkin and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 22.

My name is Joanie Calem and I am a resident of Franklin County. I am also extremely grateful that I had the good luck to be born in this country. I am appreciative of the American form of democracy that allows citizens to freely express their views, whether they are views of agreement or views of dissent, on events in our country and/or government legislation, by rallying and protesting in public spaces. Obviously, everyone who has benefitted from an American education knows that this was one of the main pillars of the foundation of this country, that, unlike under the monarchy in Great Britain where the founders had come from, here in the US citizens are not expected to always agree with rules and legislation that an elected government body has enacted, and citizens are free to voice their disagreement and gather to display that disagreement in public spaces.

According to the current wording of HB 22, your bill would amend section 2921.32 of the Revised Code to expand the offense of obstructing justice to include failure to follow a lawful order from a law enforcement officer or diverting a law enforcement officer's attention.

While on the face of it this sounds reasonable, in reality, our country is reeling from daily examples of law enforcement officers abusing their power and their weapons and physically harming and killing people across this country. Bystanders have often succeeded in keeping people alive by doing exactly what you are looking to outlaw. Changing the wording of the current law will certainly allow enforcement officers to claim that someone should be arrested, or worse, shot, because they were "obstructing justice" or "distracting" him/her. That will not necessarily be the truth. Please do not vote this bill into law. It is not going to keep Ohioans safer. Nor will it serve to bring greater justice to our state. The current law and its current wording is sufficient.

Joanie Calem