

Greetings to the committee.

I only just learned of this bill while scrolling Instagram on April 19. Thankfully I follow the NAACP Cleveland. I have to say my jaw dropped seeing their post about HB22 and the goal of “expanding obstruction of justice.” I felt angry. I feel angry. I am writing my testimony just hours after the Derek Chauvin verdict. Thankfully a verdict that held a murderer accountable. Sadly, this verdict, with our nation’s grotesque relationship with white supremacist ideals, would not have come to fruition without the video from a young brave woman’s phone.

This brings me to the wording of this bill. The goal. The goal of this bill. What is it exactly? I have to say that proposing this bill during this moment in history is repulsive to me, and I’m a white woman living in the very white town of Hudson. I cannot even begin to imagine how I’d feel if I was anything but my privileged white self.

This moment in time seems like a wonderful opportunity for healing. The needle has finally been moved toward a more just society. Liberty and justice FOR ALL may begin to look like a reality. I saw a glimmer of hope today. My impressionable 15 year old daughter seemed hopeful. And she is also white.

I fear that this bill is a direct step backward in a week that sees a nation with potential to move forward. What does this bill mean for any citizen who fails to follow a “lawful order” from an officer. What does it mean for a citizen who “diverts attention” or demands an officer stop physically harming someone, just like we saw with George Floyd and sadly countless others whose names accumulate while officers are deemed “untouchable.” Citizens who record video now may be “lawfully ordered” to stop or else. This bill suggests a stain on our records, a felony conviction, an arrest for utilizing our constitutional rights to speak up and take action if we witness injustice. This bill wants to selectively penalize the very people law enforcement should protect.

Don't confuse my statements as anti law enforcement. I believe officers have a most difficult job. My husband's godfather is retired law enforcement in Louisville, Ky. My friend Lindsey in North Carolina is married to a police officer. Her husband has hurt, THEY as a family have hurt tremendously this past year with the police brutality that has divided our nation. This division is DANGEROUS. We see "back the blue" and "blue lives matter" signs and are missing the mark in a dark and most toxic way. We know officers who got into the force on a mission to help, like Lindsey's husband. He asked to be assigned to specific neighborhoods so he could be part in bridging the gap that pits cop against citizen. Don't be blindfolded by FOX news rhetoric that wants to scare people into thinking blue lives don't matter. Of course they do. What kind of society can function though when it is all "either or." We can't function like this. We will never live in peace like this.

This committee. Criminal. Justice. Criminal Justice Committee. What exactly does this mean anyway? The very name of this committee in nature defies a more powerful force that wants to see this nation that we all must walk TOGETHER, actually UNITED. I am asking those who proposed this bill during this modern civil rights movement, to reevaluate your intentions here. If you truly love this country and all of its great potential you have an obligation to sit down and have a reckoning about protecting black and brown people like you do government buildings before verdicts are read in trials the likes of Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. No "expansion of obstruction of justice" is necessary. What IS necessary and should be being discussed is training police not to shoot to kill and using the same patience that is shown time and again with white people to our black and brown brothers and sisters. Because we all may not want to say it but let's face it, this bill aims to continue to allow cops to brutalize and mistreat those this society has deemed "less than" since it's birth. A nation built on the backs of slaves has not healed, not in the least. You can continue to make history this week by starting a new committee, one that aims to effectively work to build trust between police and the citizens they are supposed to protect, NOT have absolute power over. I want our officers to feel as safe as possible in a career that is certainly anything but. This bill is not going to protect me, black and brown people and certainly not Ohio's police officers. HB 22 is toxic and proponents of it

should hear the concerns of Rep Sedrick Denson. Sit down with your black coworkers and HEAR them and scrap this bill and start over. We should all feel like we don't have to live with a target on our back. Thank you.