



April 21, 2021

The Honorable Jeff LaRe, Committee Chair
Criminal Justice Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio

Dear Honorable LaRe,

The A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) is writing this letter in "oppositions" of H.B. 22 that is before this Criminal Justice Committee.

With deep concerns, the members of APRI see that this bill will take away the Freedom of Speech. If carried forward, this bill will take innocent observers and place them under arrest for just witnessing an arrest. We know from the George Floyd situation in Minnesota involving Officer Derek Chauvin that there are law officers that abuse their power and authority. Not every law officer abuses their power but there are some bad apples in the bunch. Bad apples need to be held accountable and tried for their actions.

If it had not been for the innocent observers standing there, recording the entire situation with their phones, and speaking up to law officers to stop and allow Mr. Floyd to breathe, accountability would not have happened. According to this bill those same observers could have been arrested, charged and their videos destroyed. THAT is taking away the observers "Freedom of Speech", and THAT is unconstitutional.

Standing in solidarity with many of our allies, the Members of APRI strongly opposed this bill. We request that this bill be thrown out of this Committee and not make it to the floor of the House for vote. We are in a climate where "all" bad apples need to be monitored and their actions to be the testimony. People want to speak up and out when wrong is being done. Who is this Committee to silence that? All people have the right to free speech and this body should not challenge the Bill of Rights of the People nor their freedom.

Sincerely,

Andre Washington, President
APRI Ohio