

The Cincinnati NAACP is opposed to HB22 because it is an arbitrary law that would allow police to increase the penalty level up to a felony against citizens exercising their right to free speech. The expansion of Obstruction of Justice is not only unnecessary but is counter-productive to ongoing efforts and achievements toward better police and community relations.

There is no evidence of an increase in citizens impeding and preventing officers from performing their official duties. Adding failure to follow a lawful order and diverting the attention of a law enforcement officer will only broaden the scope in which law enforcement can penalize citizens. This regressive measure will only create more low-level felons. This is a solution looking for a problem.

HB-22 will lend more opportunity for police abuse of power, leaving citizens vulnerable and their rights exploited. If citizens witness police misconduct and have reasonable objections, the answer is not to create laws that penalize those good Samaritans, the answer instead, should be, to seek laws that welcome accountability and discourage police misconduct.

In 2020 the world watched in horror, as George Floyd's life was taken. If not for a bystander video, it would have been the police narrative against eye witness accounts. A law like HB 22 would give police discretion to stop bystanders from documenting police abuse with phone recordings. Recordings should not be discouraged or threatened with Obstruction of Justice because an officer is annoyed. Citizens should always have the right to respectfully question and challenge actions that are excessive and abusive. Lawmakers must **cease and desist** attempts to strip away rights that are protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Again, we staunchly oppose HB-22 and demand the members of the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee, not take any further action to advance this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Mallory, President
Cincinnati NAACP