

TESTIMONY
HOUSE BILL 27 UNSECURE LOADS
May 6, 2021

GOOD MORNING MR. CHAIRMAN, VICE-CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMEBERS.

I'M EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO YOU TODAY AND PARTICULARLY WOULD LIKE TO THANK REP. PATTON FOR HIS SPONSORHIP OF HOUSE BILL 27.

I'VE SERVED AS AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER WITH NEWS 5 IN CLEVELAND FOR THE LAST 21 YEARS WHERE OUR MISSION HAS BEEN TO HELP MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE.

YOUR SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 27 WOULD TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN ENSURING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF INNOCENT VICTIMS OF ROAD DEBRIS---CAUSED BY UNSECURE LOADS ON OHIO'S ROADWAYS --IS MORE FULLY PROTECTED.

OUR INVESTIGATION FOUND HUNDREDS OF OHIOANS HAVE BEEN INJURED OR KILLED OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS IN THOUSANDS OF CRASHES CAUSED BY SHIFTING, FALLING OR SPILLING LOADS ON HIGHWAYS ACROSS THE STATE.

WE FOUND EVERYTHING FROM MATTRESSES, PLYWOOD, METAL SCRAPS—EVEN LADDERS FALLING OFF THE BACK OF TRUCKS AND CARS ON BUSY FREEWAYS.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE FOUND OHIO IS AMONG THE MOST LAX IN THE NATION WHEN IT COMES TO FINES AND PENALTIES FOR UNSECURE LOADS.

SUPRISINGLY, THERE ARE STIFFFER FINES FOR LITTERING.

CURRENTLY IN OHIO, VIOLATIONS ARE CONSIDERED MINOR MISDEMEANORS.

IN FACT, PENALTIES OF UNSECURE LOADS WERE ACTUALLY REDUCED 6 YEARS AGO.

AS OUR INVESTIGATION CONTINUED, I WOULD HAVE NO IDEA I WOULD BECOME A VICTIM.

WHILE ATTEMPTING TO AVOID A MATTRESS THAT FELL OFF THE BACK OF A PICKUP TRUCK, MY CAR WAS STRUCK BY AN 18-WHEELER AND ROLLED OVER.

PARAMEDICS TOLD ME I WAS LUCKY TO BE ALIVE.

MY BACK WAS BROKEN...AND IT TOOK MONTHS OF REHAB TO BEGIN WALKING WITHOUT INTENSE AND SEVERE PAIN.

IN THE WEEKS PRIOR, WE OBTAINED OHIO HIGHWAY PATROL CRASH DATA FOR YEARS 2015 THROUGH 2019 AND FOUND NEARLY 3-THOUSAND UNSECURE LOAD VIOLATIONS CONTRIBUTING TO NEARLY 7-THOUSAND CRASHES.

YET, OF NEARLY 28-HUNDRED DRIVERS ACTUALLY CITED FOR UNSECURE LOADS, WE FOUND FINES ARE CAPPED UNDER CURRENT LAW AT \$150.

EVEN IF SOMEONE IS SERIOUSLY INJURED, THERE ARE NO PROVISIONS TO INCREASE FINES OR PENALTIES AND THERE IS NO JAIL TIME.

OHIO IS UNLIKE 28 OTHER STATES THAT PROVIDE FINES UP FROM \$500 TO \$5,000 AND 16 OTHERS THAT PROVIDE JAIL TIME.

NATIONWIDE, THE AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION FOUND ROAD DEBRIS WAS A FACTOR IN MORE THAN 200-THOUSAND REPORTED CRASHES RESULTING IN 39-THOUSAND INJURIES AND 500 DEATHS IN JUST A 3 YEAR PERIOD.

YOUR SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 27 WOULD SEND A MESSAGE TO MOTORISTS THAT UNSECURE LOADS HAVE CONSEQUENCES THAT MANY VICTIMS HAVE TO LIVE WITH FOR YEARS.

