

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Lis Regula. I am a college lecturer in biology at University of Dayton. I've also been heavily involved in the community and civic life when I lived in Kent up until fall of 2019, and getting involved again here in Columbus as I settle in. I strongly oppose both HB 22 and HB 109, which aim to end peaceful protest in Ohio.

I am writing today to oppose both bills but wanted to talk specifically about HB 22. This bill adds penalties that remove harmless and typical peaceful protest activities like throwing glitter or confetti at Pride parades. It also doesn't define "use of force" which has been known to be an excuse for Police to harm or even kill people (especially minorities). While not specifically written to address public witness, these newly defined offenses will apply at peaceful public witness events and are part of the larger picture for anti-protest bills in Ohio.

Protest has been instrumental in many historic advances in our history. Without the protests, demonstrations, boycotts, and even riots that led to the American Revolution, the US might never have come to be. In generation after generation, public protest has achieved important social change, from ending child labor and school segregation to increasing environmental standards and workplace safety. Sometimes those public protests have become very intense, but protest is as American as apple pie and is critical to our shared history. Restricting the right to protest is a betrayal of our founders and ancestors.

I realize that you are trying to fill what you see as a gap in protecting officers and appreciate your concern for our first responders' safety. However, law enforcement already has the tools necessary to respond to violent criminals and vigilantes. Instead of addressing the demands of public safety organizations, HB 22 would only make the jobs of law enforcement harder by adding fuel to the fire in dangerous situations. Additionally, prosecutors across Ohio already have the means to prosecute violence or rioting.

This bill is broad enough that it will apply to peaceful protest and the entirely Constitutional exercise of free speech. Our first amendment gives the people a right to voice their dissatisfaction with the government. When the government silences the people, it's UN-American. It's time we come together to ensure our constitutional right to free speech and freedom of assembly prevail over the criminalization of peaceful protesters

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this unpatriotic and likely unconstitutional bill that will make the exercise of protected free speech in Ohio MORE dangerous, and bring us one step closer to states like our grandparents fought in World War II. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Lis Regula, Ph.D.