



Groveport Division of Police
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To: Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee
From: Detective Josh Gilbert, Groveport Police Department
RE: H.B. 408 Proponent Testimony

Good Morning. My name is Josh Gilbert, and I am a Detective for the City of Groveport Police Department. I have been a Police Officer for 18-years and in my career, I have worked countless investigations.

I am here today on behalf of the Groveport Police Department to offer proponent testimony for House Bill 408 which will save thousands of Ohioans from becoming the victim of catalytic converter theft.

Throughout my career in law enforcement, I have seen many different types of crime and criminals are always masterminding and executing new ones. We in law enforcement have to adapt to those crimes and it's our duty to develop tactics to protect the innocent victims of Ohio. Some historical perspective. When the theft of copper was at an all-time high, I would take reports from victims after their air conditioning units were cut directly off their homes. Laws were created to slow down the copper being scrapped at the various scrap yards. Copper is now a special purchase article.

A catalytic converter is required on all vehicles and used to protect the environment from pollution. Catalytic converters contain three precious metals; platinum, palladium and rhodium. Rhodium's current market value is over \$18,000 per ounce.



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Over the last 9-months, I have worked a catalytic converter theft enterprise that caused a loss to society of over 1.7 million dollars and made over \$480,000 that we can find. I began working this case when the City of Groveport began to experience a large amount of Catalytic Converter thefts in the summer of 2021. Throughout this case, I have had the opportunity to interview suspects, scrap yard managers and victims across five Ohio counties. This particular group of thieves would target not only box trucks from businesses, but also hard-working employee's vehicles. A Franklin County grand jury indicted 6-people on 90-felony charges from this group and we expect additional indictments. I'm frequently asked if this case will slow down catalytic converter thefts? The answer is, it will not. House Bill 408 will.

Throughout my investigation, I saw firsthand the impact these thefts had on victims. Many victims would be getting off a long day of work only to find that they now owe a deductible to an insurance company or thousands of dollars out of pocket to fix their vehicle, if you could even find the parts needed for the repair. Many businesses were forced to shut down due to their box trucks not being able to make deliveries. Even more concerning, emergency medical squads could no longer transport patients due to not being able to find replacement parts.

Currently in the state of Ohio, any "peddler" or individual can only scrap one catalytic converter per Ohio driver's license, per day. However, any individual with access to the internet can quickly obtain a vendor's license or create a business. At that point, the new "business owner" can scrap as many catalytic converters as they want with no proof of where they obtained the converter. In addition, most all scrap yards are paying cash to the scrapper, no matter the dollar amount, leaving no outgoing or incoming banking trail for law enforcement to follow. Current programs like LEADS online and CIMS do track individual scrappers and the scrap yards on a searchable database, but you cannot track a business turning in scrap. Throughout my investigation, I found no consistency with the way scrap yards collect or document accepting catalytic converters (please see provided transactional data from three companies).



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In the course of my investigation, I learned one scrap yard in Muskingum County would send a driver more than an hour to Franklin County to collect catalytic converters and, no matter the dollar amount, pay cash straight from the driver of the van to the scrapper.

House Bill 408 would require anyone who wants to scrap more than one catalytic converter per day to obtain a bulk catalytic converter license. HB 408 also places additional penalties on scrap yards if they violate the guidelines in the bill. The proposed legislation would also mandate scrap yards to pay by check rather than cash. In addition, Catalytic Converters would be classified as special purchase articles in the Ohio Revised Code and, under theft or receiving stolen property, be an automatic felony.

In conclusion, criminals are exploiting a legal loophole that is allowing them to “get rich fast” off the backs of honest, hardworking Ohioans and small businesses. Just as disturbing, the criminals are often exploiting those caught in the grip of addiction to perform the crime for them while paying them only a small fraction of the profit. I ask you to seriously consider HB 408 to end the cycle of crime and protect the citizens of Ohio. Thank you.