



Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association

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House Bill 408
Proponent Testimony
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Chairman LaRe, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 408 to provide more safeguards around the sale and purchase of catalytic converters and to provide increased penalties for catalytic converter theft.

Theft of catalytic converters has exploded over the last few years as the price of the precious metals that they contain has skyrocketed. Just last week, there was a headline in the Columbus news that said “Columbus man exploits loophole to steal 1,100+ catalytic converters.”¹ Other headlines about the theft of these items abound across Ohio and across the nation. Something has to be done to bring this illegal activity under control. The cost to replace a catalytic converter can be as high as a couple of thousand dollars. When businesses are hit the cost can rise to several thousand dollars or even into the tens of thousands of dollars very quickly. These losses can also drive up insurance costs. As important as the cost of the replacement is the loss of the use of the person’s car for several days while the converter is replaced. Victims might struggle to get to work or to school, could lose their jobs or critical business revenue, and could struggle to make ends meet.

According to the Insurance Journal, ten states enacted legislation in 2021 that impose new requirements on those who buy converters and toughen penalties surrounding catalytic converters.² Another such law passed in Virginia just last month.³ House Bill 408 generally tracks with how other states are dealing with this problem.

First, the bill includes catalytic converters in the definition of “special purchase article” thereby imposing additional requirements on scrap metal dealers who purchase them. Records of the purchase of special purchase articles have to be entered into the Communication Information Management System (CIMS) at the Department of Public Safety immediately upon purchase instead of just once per day. The purchaser must take a photograph of each special purchase article, obtain proof of ownership from the seller, issue a

¹ <https://www.10tv.com/article/news/investigations/10-investigates/police-loophole-ohio-allowed-thief-who-stole-1100-catalytic-converters-to-flourish/530-01303485-d6fa-4f35-b196-22847922c041>

² <https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/national/2022/01/03/647803.htm>

³ <https://www.fox5dc.com/news/virginia-general-assembly-approves-legislation-to-tackle-catalytic-converter-thefts>

check instead of cash, and withhold payment for a period of two days. The bill also applies these requirements to other purchasers of catalytic converters who are not scrap metal dealers – like motor vehicle salvage and motor vehicle repair businesses.

Second, by including catalytic converters in the definition of special purchase article the bill increases the penalty for theft of a catalytic converter and receiving stolen property when the property is a catalytic converter to a felony of the fifth degree on a first offense. The legislation also specifically provides that theft of a catalytic converter or receiving a stolen property when the property is a catalytic converter is a felony of the fourth degree if the offender has previously been convicted of a violation of Chapter 2911, 2913, or 2923 and provides for higher fine amounts for business entities.

I want to thank Rep. Young for introducing this legislation, for seeking our input on it, and for his advocacy to help solve a problem that is having such a negative impact on innocent victims across the state. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of the bill. We encourage the committee's favorable consideration and I would be happy to answer questions.