

WEATHERSFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Police

**HB 206 – Township Police
Proponent Testimony
March 16, 2022
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee**

As Chief of the Weathersfield Township Police Department, Trumbull County, I am submitting this written testimony in support of House Bill 2006, which provides arrest authority for township police officers in townships with a population of more than 5,000 on interstate highways within the township.

Weathersfield Township has a population of approximately 9,500 people. Interstate 76 runs through Weathersfield Township and there is an entrance to Interstate 76 within Weathersfield Township. As a result, Township police officers are frequently called to Interstate 76 to respond to accidents and support the Highway Patrol.

However, because current law permits only police officers in townships with a population over 50,000 people to make arrests for traffic violations on Interstate highways, Weathersfield Township police officers, who are full-time peace officers, are prohibited from enforcing the law on Interstate 76 within the township. Even if a Weathersfield Police officer has been called to assist at an accident by the Highway Patrol, the Weathersfield officer cannot make an arrest for a traffic violation that occurs right in front of them. If a passing car endangers a Weathersfield police officer by failing to move over for a Weathersfield Police Officer who has been called to a crash on the interstate, in violation of R.C. 4511.213, the Weathersfield police officer is prohibited from making an arrest.

Passage of HB 206 would allow Weathersfield police officers to enforce traffic safety laws that they are currently prohibited from enforcing on the interstate, including: operating a vehicle in willful or wanton disregard of safety; texting while driving, driving on the wrong side of the road, or failing to use headlights. The current restriction on the ability of police officers to enforce the law within their jurisdiction is a detriment to the citizens, and a benefit only to law breakers who have been successful in suppressing evidence of drug activity when they have been stopped on the interstate by a township police officer for a traffic violation. (*State of Ohio v. Brown*).

As Chief of Police of Weathersfield Township, I support HB 206 and strongly encourage adoption by this committee..


Chief of Police