



March 15, 2022

The Honorable Kristina D. Roegner, Chair  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
Ohio Senate  
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Proponent Testimony- HB 206

I submit this proponent testimony in support of HB 206 in my capacity as Chief of Police for Bath Township, Summit County, Ohio. As currently adopted, R.C. 4513.39 imposes limits on the authority of township police officers to enforce certain statutory violations on interstate highways that extend through a community, unless the township's population threshold exceeds 50,000 residents. The current statutory language and population threshold contained therein excludes townships like Bath from critical interstate response and enforcement in their communities and should be amended.

Interstate 77 extends from the southern limits to the northern jurisdictional boundary of Bath Township, a community of 10,024 residents in Summit County Ohio. This interstate corridor extends through the center of the township and is a vital transportation corridor for the state of Ohio. During my tenure as a police officer with the township, the police department dispatch center has received a variety of calls related to Interstate 77, including reckless/impaired motorists, traffic crashes, domestic violence and a fatality involving a dispute between motorists. In each of these cases, immediate law enforcement response was vital to ensuring the safety and security of residents and visitors alike. Because of the restrictions in R.C. 4513.39, township police officers responding to interstate incidents are only able to serve in a secondary law enforcement role, relying on other agencies like the Ohio State Highway Patrol to enforce applicable laws. In many cases, other agencies are delayed in their response to incidents on Interstate 77 in Bath Township due to the proximity of available law enforcement personnel. Response delays can jeopardize the prosecution of criminal cases, with the end result of not holding offenders accountable for their actions. As an example, OVI enforcement requires the offender to submit to a chemical test within two hours of the alleged violation (R.C. 4511.192).

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The inability of another agency responding to Bath Township to investigate an OVI incident on the interstate due to a time delay could be problematic for prosecution of the case.

Furthermore, the limits on interstate authority imposed under the current statute prevent township law enforcement officers from performing their essential function of preventing and detecting crime. The Ohio Supreme Court decision in *State v. Brown*, 143 Ohio St.3d 444, 2015- Ohio-2438 illustrates how evidence from a vehicle search following a traffic violation was excluded because of the limits on interstate authority that were placed on a township police officer. Clearly, the legislative intent was never to prevent police officers from performing their essential duties.

I've worked with several local legislators over the years to amend R.C. 4513.39 and appreciate the introduction of HB 206 that will hopefully correct this statute. Amending the population threshold in R.C. 4513.39 to include townships with at least 5,000 residents, will address a long-standing problem regarding the limits on township police authority on interstate highways.

The Ohio Township Association, in recent correspondence sent to township officials regarding the subject bill, referenced concerns from legislative members that HB 206 could allow for the creation of "speed traps" on the interstates. However, townships, unlike municipalities, lack home rule authority to enact local ordinances. Township police officers rely upon the Ohio Revised Code to criminally charge individuals for criminal and traffic violations. Fines collected by township police officers under the Ohio Revised Code are deposited into the county treasury. For that reason, there is no incentive for townships to create a "speed trap" under HB 206.

On behalf of Bath Township and other similarly situated townships in Ohio, I strongly encourage your support of HB 206.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vito F. Sinopoli', written in a cursive style.

Vito F. Sinopoli, Esq.  
Administrator/Chief of Police