

**Senator Sandra Williams**  
**21<sup>st</sup> Ohio Senate District**



**Senator Cecil Thomas**  
**9<sup>th</sup> Ohio Senate District**

**Senate Bill 72**  
**Sponsor Testimony**  
**Judiciary Committee**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair McColley, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 72. This legislation is an important step forward in remedying the lack of trust and accountability many of our communities feel when dealing with law enforcement.

In terms of use of force, this legislation will follow the policy recommendations put forth by the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board. When responding to resistance, the law enforcement response must be based on the actions and behavior of the person and be reasonable for the situation. The level of response must be balanced against the likelihood of injury to the person, to innocent bystanders and to the law enforcement officer.

This legislation will also address the use of deadly force. Under this legislation, law enforcement officers must have a reasonable belief deadly force is necessary to protect life before the use of deadly force. Law enforcement officers shall be justified in using deadly force only under the following circumstances: (1) to defend themselves from serious physical injury or death; or (2) to defend another person from serious physical injury or death.

The third component of this legislation is to address the use of chokeholds by law enforcement to detain citizens. As we've seen in the past with Eric Gardner, and more recently George Floyd, using chokeholds can be deadly. Following the police accountability protests two summers ago, Governor DeWine announced his support for banning neck restraints unless the officer's life is at risk. According to Fatal Encounters, a searchable database, at least 134 people died in police custody from "asphyxia or restraint" in the last decade.

The goal of this legislation is to change police culture in Ohio and promote a downward trend in the number of use of force incidents and fatalities at the hands of law enforcement officers. Public trust in law enforcement, especially within the African-American community, continues to decrease when it comes to the perception of civilian-police interactions. It is imperative that we establish significant reforms to ensure that these tragic situations, when they occur, are appropriately reviewed and standards are upheld.

(Senator Thomas) Although there is not a single remedy to eliminate police misconduct and restore public trust, we must take steps to make our processes more transparent and without bias. Senate Bill 72 is a step in the right direction.

As Sen. Williams mentioned, we believe the measures outlined in the bill increase accountability and will help in increasing the public trust that is critical between the community and law enforcement.

There is a dynamic of suspicion in policing. Police by training are always on alert as they uncover potential danger and maintain order. Unfortunately this characteristic can evolve into cynicism and distrust of citizens unless guard rails are in place. Implementing across the board standards is essential, as is proper training on those standards.

We know that a single contact between a member of the public and a law enforcement officer can have a profound influence upon perceptions of the police more generally by the individual's friends, family, and in the community. Use of excessive force by law enforcement that is not warranted in a particular police encounter erodes public trust. Public trust in law enforcement decreases as use of excessive force increases. All of this contributes to an overall negative and hostile relationship between law enforcement and the public.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee this completes our testimony. We would be happy to answer any questions.