

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, and members of the Civil Justice Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to speak before you today on a matter of utmost importance - House Bill 265. This bill addresses a fundamental issue that touches the core of our society: the protection of our public service workers from public records requests for their schedules.

Public service workers are the backbone of our communities. They are the first responders who rush into danger when we call for help. They dedicate their lives to serving the people of Ohio, often at the cost of personal time and security. Our moral duty is to ensure their well-being, including safeguarding their privacy.

In the information age, transparency is essential, and public records requests are a powerful tool to hold our government accountable. However, there must be a balance between openness and protecting those who selflessly serve our communities. Public service workers' schedules should be out of bounds for several compelling reasons.

Firstly, the safety and security of our public service workers are paramount. The disclosure of their schedules can expose them to undue risks. Police officers, for instance, often work in dangerous conditions, and disclosing their schedules could make them easy targets for individuals with malicious intent. In the case of Emergency Medical Service personnel, a breach of their schedules could lead to disruptions in essential healthcare services, jeopardizing patients' lives.

Secondly, the privacy of public service workers must be respected. They deserve the same personal freedoms that any other citizen enjoys. Just as we respect the privacy of our schedules, we should extend the same courtesy to these dedicated individuals. They need time to decompress, spend quality moments with their families, and attend to their personal needs without constant public scrutiny.

Thirdly, discussing schedules might lead to inefficiency within our public service agencies. For example, knowing the precise schedules of first responders could enable criminals to time their activities to avoid detection. This not only compromises public safety but also diminishes the effectiveness of these vital services.

House Bill 265 seeks to strike the right balance by protecting the personal schedules of our public service workers while preserving the transparency necessary for accountability. The bill does not undermine the principle of open government or hinder access to essential information. It merely respects the privacy and security of those who work tirelessly for the betterment of our communities.

In conclusion, I implore you to support House Bill 265, not as an obstruction to transparency but as a safeguard for our public service workers and the vital services they provide. Let us demonstrate our commitment to their well-being and security by respecting the sanctity of their schedules. By passing this bill, you will affirm your dedication to the people

who selflessly serve Ohio, and in doing so, you will send a powerful message that our state values the safety and privacy of those who protect and serve.

Thank you for your attention, and I urge you to stand for protecting our public service workers by supporting House Bill 265. Thank you.