

OHIO FAMILIES UNITE

FOR POLITICAL ACTION AND CHANGE

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Emily Cole and I am the Executive Director of Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and Change, or OFUPAC. OFUPAC is the policy and action arm of Ohio Families Unite Against Police Brutality. OFUPAC was started by Ohio families directly impacted by the criminalization of poverty, police brutality, incarceration, and the criminal legal system here in Ohio. I am here today to testify as an interested party for House Bill 56, specifically in regard to the inclusion of written police pursuit policies for all police departments in Ohio.

Transparently, there are components of House Bill 56 which we oppose. We do not support increasing criminal penalties for behavior which is already illegal, such as fleeing from law enforcement. We do not support income-based punitive measures that create a two-tiered system of justice, such as the fines for hooning proposed in this legislation. I'm not here to speak on these today, though I'll answer any questions on our opposition to these components to the best of my ability.

I'm here today because we are proud to support the requirement that every law enforcement agency in Ohio put in place a written policy for pursuit of a motor vehicle, and train on these components for each officer in the department. **The impacted families I work with at OFUPAC strongly encourage you to maintain the original minimum required standards outlined in the version of House Bill 56 as introduced.** Further, we recommend pursuit policies apply not just to vehicular pursuits, but also be adapted and required for foot pursuits as well.

It is our firm belief that vehicle pursuits should only be undertaken when there is a threat to public safety so severe it could result in imminent injury or death. There is no need to risk the safety of the general public, the officers involved, and the person or people under pursuit if the driver is identifiable and not an imminent

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risk to safety. In fact, a high number of death and injuries experienced by police officers and community members occur *during* pursuits. We have multiple families in our organization who have had a child or relative killed during a pursuit, many of whom were innocent bystanders who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

An estimated 400 people die annually during a police pursuit, including law enforcement, those under pursuit, and those who happened to be in the vicinity of an active pursuit. **Civil lawsuits over pursuit-related injuries and deaths are the largest source of liability for police.**

Having a minimum, consistent set of standards for when officers can engage in vehicular pursuits will absolutely increase the safety of our communities and the wellbeing of our neighbors and our law enforcement officers. It will also empower better collaboration between local law enforcement agencies and the State Highway Patrol, and other state and federal law enforcement agencies. We strongly support the original minimum standards introduced by Representative Plummer and Representative White in House Bill 56, and encourage the inclusion of a requirement for written foot pursuit policies as well.

I ask you to consider my testimony as you vote on this bill, and in some capacity please move forward on legislating all police departments in Ohio to have a mandate for a written pursuit policy plus appropriate training for the pursuit of a motor vehicle and for foot pursuits. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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