



## **Proponent Testimony HB 536**

Chairwoman Abrams, Vice Chairman Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 536.

The Ohio Insurance Agents Association (OIA) is the collective voice of 1,200 independent agencies that employ nearly 11,000 Ohioans. We promote, progress, and protect the profession and the guidance only independent insurance agents provide. Independent insurance agents are trusted advisors to Ohio citizens and businesses and are responsible for servicing 85% of the commercial policies and 44% of the personal policies in the state. Independent agents offer many types of insurance – auto, health, home, life, and business insurance – from many different companies to match consumers with the best choices for their particular needs.

We write in support of HB 536. This bill has several key provisions aimed at enhancing road safety in our state. It proposes making the failure to wear a seatbelt a primary offense, as well as making the failure to properly secure a child in a booster seat a primary offense. Under current law, law enforcement officers may observe a child who is improperly secured in a booster seat but lacks the authority to intervene directly. This bill changes that.

As the sponsors have said, the primary goal of HB 536 is not to increase revenue from traffic tickets or to impose harsher penalties on Ohioans. To that end, the bill does not alter the existing fine amounts for seatbelt violations. Instead, it introduces an occupant restraint safety course for first-time offenders, which can be taken in lieu of paying the fine. This course, designed by the Department of Public Safety, will be offered free of charge.

Moreover, the bill mandates that law enforcement agencies submit specified reports to the Attorney General's office, which will then compile a comprehensive report for the Governor's office and General Assembly. These reports will include data on the number of tickets issued for seatbelt and child booster seat violations, enabling data-driven decisions to enhance the safety of Ohioans and improve law enforcement performance. This data would keep transparency around the effect of these changes and provide valuable data to Ohioans and interested parties.

From an insurance perspective, improving seatbelt compliance can significantly impact the cost of car insurance. With rising costs in not only Ohio but the entire country, reducing the risk of severe injuries and fatalities in auto collisions could potentially lead to lower insurance premiums for Ohioans.

In conclusion, HB 536 is a crucial step toward safeguarding the lives of Ohio's residents and reducing insurance costs. I urge the committee to support this bill and help make our roads safer for everyone.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to support HB 536 and to the sponsors Representative Cross and Representative Miller for bringing forward this important legislation. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me.

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