



Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan, and members of the House Government Oversight 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 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 stand with and for our families in opposition to House Bill 100.

In a time when most harmful interactions with police are blamed on “a few bad apples”, shifting the culture within departments remains paramount. Enshrining the “thin blue line” flag into Ohio’s state law does the opposite.

Many of the families I work with and for have had a child, a husband, a brother, a sister, or a friend killed during an interaction with Ohio police officers. They’ve buried children, parents, neighbors, and friends, who would otherwise still be with us if that interaction with a police officer had gone differently.

Having buried family members, our families understand the profound grief from loss that motivates legislation like this. But there is no flag on earth that will lessen that loss. And enshrining a symbol of the police into our state law, protected above symbols like the transgender flag, the pride flag, the Black Lives Matter flag, the Jewish flag, the Christian flag, among *many many* other flags that exist, is inappropriate and shortsighted.

The reality is this flag has meaning beyond symbolizing support for police. It symbolizes the brutality Black Ohioans experience every day, where they are 4.5 times more likely to be killed by police than White Ohioans. It symbolizes the brutality over 670 families in Ohio have experienced since 2000 alone having buried a loved one. Last year alone, police in Ohio killed 41 people. That is 41 families who will never see their loved one again. And these numbers are just for *deaths*, not including all other forms of over-policing and police brutality.

Protecting the “thin blue line” flag above all others is unnecessary and insensitive to the pain experienced by families in Ohio at the hands of the police. You are re-traumatizing them by forcing associations to allow this flag when others are not also protected. When



they see this flag flying at the homes of their neighbors, they know that is not a safe place for them.

For these reasons, I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on House Bill 100. Let's work together to create a culture around community safety that keeps everyone safer - both the police, and those policed. Enshrining the "thin blue line" flag into Ohio's state law takes us backward, and directly harms our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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Data cited is from Mapping Police Violence - <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>.