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**Sponsor Testimony House Bill 237**

Chairman Ghanbari, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee, good morning. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 237. This bill aims to bring clarity and consistency to the traffic laws and safety equipment regulations for UTVs, also known as side-by-sides.

Currently, the laws and regulations surrounding the operation of UTVs are confusing and enforcement is inconsistent. For example, some areas in the state allow UTVs to be registered for on-road use while others do not. There are also exemptions in place for the agriculture community. By implementing a statewide framework, we can simplify the understanding and application of these regulations. This will ensure that UTV operators can safely navigate Ohio's roads and understand their responsibilities.

In addition, uniform regulations will benefit law enforcement officers who are responsible for enforcing traffic laws. They will have clearer guidelines and expectations when it comes to UTVs.

The proposed legislation would allow for the registration and operation of UTV's on township and county roads if the following two prongs are met:

- 1) The vehicle passes a safety inspection conducted by a law enforcement agency.
- 2) The Board of Commissioners passes a resolution to allow their use.

If a county chooses to adopt a resolution allowing UTV usage, UTVs can legally operate on any county or township road with a maximum speed limit of 55 MPH. Operators must also comply with the safety and traffic regulations outlined in this legislation. However, if a county does not

adopt a resolution permitting UTV usage, it is illegal to operate UTVs on township and county roads within that county.

It is important to understand that municipalities and villages have home rule authority, which means they can enact their own regulations within their jurisdiction. This provision acknowledges the significance of local decision-making and allows counties to decide whether UTVs are allowed on their roads, aligning with the preferences of each community.

This legislation also prioritizes the safety of UTV operators and passengers. It requires mandatory safety equipment such as a roll cage, two red reflectors, a rearview mirror, a windshield or safety glasses, and occupant restraining devices for everyone.