



# *Greater Warren County Drug Task Force*

822 Memorial Drive – Lebanon, Ohio 45036

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## **House Bill 230**

(Written Proponent Testimony)

October 18, 2023

**Major Steve Arrasmith**

### GREETINGS

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the House Homeland Security Committee – Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on **House Bill 230**.

### INTRODUCTION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony regarding **House Bill 230**. My name is **Major Steve Arrasmith** and I am the Commander of the Greater Warren County Drug Task Force. I have been employed by the Warren County Sheriff's Office for approximately 32 years and have been assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division at the Sheriff's Office for 27 years. I have been involved in drug task force operations for the last 24 years of my career, serving in various capacities including detective, detective sergeant, and detective lieutenant. I also serve as the Southwest District Representative of the Ohio Task Force Commanders Association.

The Greater Warren County Drug Task Force is a multi-jurisdictional task force and an initiative of the Ohio HIDTA program. Our task force has been in existence for over two decades and maintains a staff of 18-22 members, from 12 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. We serve all of Warren County and the City of Wilmington in Clinton County, with a combined estimated population of over 259,000 citizens. We are located between Dayton and Cincinnati, and remain one of the fastest growing jurisdictions in Ohio.

The mission of our task force is to provide specialized drug enforcement services to our community, reducing drug trafficking crimes and related criminal activity. This is accomplished by targeting mid-upper level drug traffickers who operate in, or impact our jurisdiction. Our geographical location, between Dayton and Cincinnati, allow easy access for drug traffickers operating from two of the most significant source cities for illegal drugs in the State of Ohio.

### REMARKS ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Many challenges exist for Ohio task forces, from funding and manpower, to increasing amounts of illegal drugs which continue to saturate our state. Drug traffickers operating throughout Ohio have enjoyed the trend of amended sentencing guidelines resulting in the likelihood of reduced or no prison sentences. This fact has significantly impacted the availability of illegal drugs in Ohio as traffickers

conduct their illegal activity with great confidence that prison is unlikely, especially if they traffic in lower quantities.

The reality of drug related overdose deaths remain a direct result of the increased availability of illegal drugs in our communities. The fluid nature of drug trafficking also continues to challenge task forces as traffickers are oftentimes mobile, utilizing motor vehicles as they move between jurisdictions without fear of significant consequences by our judicial system. Without an aggressive sentencing structure, drug traffickers will continue to target our growing population, resulting in worsening addiction and increased accidental overdose deaths in our communities.

The increased penalties included in **House Bill 230** will directly impact drug trafficking activities throughout Ohio. Increasing penalties for those trafficking in fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin sends an immediate message to traffickers that Ohio has taken a strong stance to protect our citizens. Based on my own experiences throughout my career I believe the best deterrent to reduce drug trafficking crimes is strong penalties.

In addition to the positive changes of increasing drug trafficking penalties, **House Bill 230** also imposes a sentencing specification and mandatory prison term of 5 years if the victim's death is consistent with opioid overdose and fentanyl and/or a fentanyl related compound was found present in lethal amounts. This sentencing requirement is long overdue as many of our addicted population continue to overdose and die. This added specification is an appropriate addition and coupled with the increased penalties proposed in **House Bill 230** will send an immediate message that drug trafficking crimes are not tolerated in Ohio.

Some may worry that **House Bill 230** will result in greater numbers of incarcerated persons in our state. I would respond that this bill does not remove the ability for prosecutors to negotiate plea agreements to lesser sentences at their discretion. This allows the system to facilitate treatment opportunities for appropriate defendants, and also holds accountable those who prey upon our addicted population. The reality is that some defendants require incarceration and **House Bill 230** provides changes to accomplish just that.

Thank you again for allowing me to provide written testimony in support of **House Bill 230**. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill and for your ongoing service to the citizens of the State of Ohio. Your work is appreciated.

Respectfully,



Major Steve Arrasmith  
Commander