



Representative Lauren McNally
59th House District

Good morning, Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Ohio House Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill (HB) 473, legislation requiring the installation and maintenance of a system of security cameras at each rest area over which the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) has jurisdiction.

Highway travel isn't without its risks and a lot can come up when you're on the road whether it be flat tires, spilled drinks, or a restroom break. Ohioans and visitors weigh a lot of factors in determining whether to stop or when to stop while driving, with safety being the strongest consideration.

Our family of six decided to drive to a vacation destination, which required going through the West Virginia hills. I didn't know it, but our then three-year-old was getting motion sickness. She threw up all over herself. She was unhappy and a mess. The smell was spreading through the car, along with everyone's agitation.

Even in peak discomfort, our family weighed the pros and cons of stopping. It wasn't clear, on those winding roads, what location offered us what we needed. It wasn't until we made it to a Welcome Center that we finally stopped, got her cleaned up, and went on our way.

She threw up again, all over herself, which is beside the point. The point is that travelers will endure a great deal of discomfort rather than stop. When they do, they're looking for locations with a presumption of safety, which rest areas often are. After all, Ohio's rest areas are meant to give travelers, truck drivers, and families a safe place to rest, which can increase focus and safety when they get back on the road.¹

HB 473 in no way is meant to suggest that Ohio's rest areas are not safe. HB 473 is a good government, public safety bill that increases traveler confidence in the safeness of our rest areas and can, in turn, assist law enforcement should the need arise. Cameras are meant to be an

¹ <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/traveling/rest-areas#:~:text=%22Our%20rest%20stops%20give%20travelers,get%20back%20on%20the%20road>

additional security tool and to help give travelers assurance. It says to them that, should something bad come to pass, evidence and a record will be readily available.

Any public or private space can be susceptible to crime and rest areas are not an exception. Numerous investigations of offense reports at rest stops statewide found that the most common crimes are finding stolen cars, drug use, sex crimes and thefts from cars.² Furthermore, Ohio ranks fifth for human trafficking incidents, with studies suggesting that Toledo may be a national hub for the sex trafficking of juveniles.³⁴ Truck stops and rest areas appeal to sex traffickers because they have transient populations and people are coming and going at all times of day.⁵

As news spread about HB 473, I was contacted by the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission. They were hoping to share with my office information about their security system, much like that proposed by this legislation, and invite me to tour. In doing so, they shared how their video footage assisted the Ohio State Highway Patrol with identifying a human trafficking victim and catching the trafficker. This is the exact goal of the legislation. Cameras are a cost effective, public safety tool that we must encourage the state to fully implement in these public spaces, and HB 473 is how we do that.

The scope of this proposal is not burdensome on the state or taxpayers. ODOT currently operates [85 rest stops](#) in Ohio. Beginning in 2019, ODOT began to install security cameras in new rest area buildings and sites as they are rebuilt. The Legislative Affairs team at ODOT shared with the Legislative Services Commission (LSC) that there are currently 5 sites operational with two more coming live by the end of 2023 and an additional seven rest areas scheduled to have cameras installed this year. In May of 2023, Governor DeWine announced plans to renovate [33 rest stops](#) over the next four years. While this news did not indicate if these updates would include the installation of cameras, HB 473 will ensure that they do.

Ohioans can expect a good return on their investment with HB 473 because cameras are a cost-effective crime deterrent. A study involving a survey of burglary inmates in Ohio, North Carolina and Kentucky revealed that indicators of increased security (alarm signs, alarms, dogs inside, and outdoor cameras or other surveillance equipment) was considered by most burglars when selecting a target.⁶ A 40-year systematic review of the effects of closed-circuit television networks on crime trends in countries like Britain and South Korea found an overall 13 percent reduction in crime in areas with CCTV.⁷

² <https://www.10tv.com/article/news/crime/crime-tracker/ohio-rest-stops-get-attention-state-highway-patrol/530-bbf5bba6-fa66-49ad-800d-fc2528eef09a>

³ <https://humantraffickingfront.org/human-trafficking-in-ohio/>

⁴ <https://htcourts.org/ohio/>

⁵ <https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/sex-traffickers-thrive-ohio-interstates/k9UqXeMozuvXhM2jqyoBhl/>

⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268444817_Understanding_Decisions_to_Burglarize_from_the_Offender%27s_Perspective

⁷ <https://ericpiza.net/2020/12/02/cctv-review/>

Another study conducted a cost-benefit analysis and revealed that surveillance cameras annually deter approximately 575 crimes, 75 of which are displaced to places nearby, at a cost of \$1,000,000.⁸ Hence, the cost of preventing one crime is estimated to be approximately \$2,000.⁹ In Chicago and Baltimore cameras were linked to a reduction in crime, even beyond the areas with camera coverage, and saved Chicago over four dollars for every dollar spent on the technology, while Baltimore yielded a 50 cent return on the dollar.¹⁰ Cameras at rest areas is smart fiscal policy that makes these state-managed areas safer.

In addition to being a deterrent, cameras can assist in solving crimes. Two states (Virginia and Texas) who maintain rest area cameras and responded to a research inquiry from NCSL indicated that either state police frequently request footage for various reasons or local authorities had requested the footage when investigating incidents. A compilation of interviews with detectives found that camera footage provides additional leads in an investigation and aids in securing witness cooperation while prosecutors noted that video footage served as a complement to—but not a replacement for—eyewitness evidence in the courtroom.¹¹

But we shouldn't think of HB 473 and this investment purely from a criminal lens. Safety can mean a lot of things for families, including those that aren't traveling. For example, just this week alone, our office received additional stories about the usefulness of rest stops or roadside cameras in helping locate loved ones in distress.

One story came via law enforcement as part of yesterday's Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence's statehouse advocacy day. They shared with my staff that they successfully used cameras after a report came in of a missing family member with a dementia diagnosis. Another story came from advocates with the Ohio Association for Justice. They shared that cameras were used by law enforcement after a report of a missing veteran who was in the middle of a mental health crisis. They found the veteran on a bridge, saving their life in the process. These are real people, real Ohioans, with families who love them who are speaking to the value of this legislation.

HB 473 will require the Director of Transportation to consult with the Director of Public Safety and the Attorney General in determining the appropriate schedule for installation and maintenance of the security cameras, with the initial system installation being completed at all rest areas by June 30, 2031. This gives the legislature several operating budgets to support this work that is already underway, while requiring continued maintenance, which is key.

My office and LSC have inquired about the overall, projected cost for the approximately 70 remaining rest areas to be equipped with this security system after 2024. The ODOT Division of

⁸ <https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/230-priks.pdf>

⁹ <https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/230-priks.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/evaluating-use-public-surveillance-cameras-crime-control-and-prevention>

¹¹ <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-surveillance-cameras-can-help-prevent-and-solve-crime>

Facilities and Equipment Management estimated the initial cost range for the current security camera package to a new rest area is between \$182,028 and \$507,967. I'm no mathematician, but that works out to be around \$12,741,960 - \$35,557,690 in total cost for the remaining rest areas by the end of 2031, or \$2,123,660 - \$5,926,282 a year. For our overall budget, that is a very small upfront investment for something that research shows our taxpayers could receive back four-fold. HB 473 just makes sense.

Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Ohio House Homeland Security Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this practical, public safety legislation. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.