



OHIO PATROLMEN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

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Representative Haraz Ghanbari
Chairman, Homeland Security Committee
Ohio House of Representatives

Proponent Testimony - House Bill 333 June 5, 2024

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and distinguished members of the House Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 333. My name is George Sakellakis, and I am the Director of Organization with the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, representing 8,000 members in Ohio's law enforcement, corrections and other criminal justice systems. I am also in my twenty-second year of full time service as a police officer. The Ohio PBA is a proud proponent of this bill, which will prohibit ticket and arrest quotas and clearly project to Ohioans that traffic and criminal law enforcement is unequivocally based on safety, and not revenue.

Many of us, either the public in general, or even in law enforcement, have probably been under the impression that ticket and arrest quotas are already illegal. Unfortunately, they are not. Quotas are generally viewed negatively across the board; both the public and the law enforcement officers who are subject to them view them as unethical, potentially unconstitutional, and patently unfair. The passage of this bill would end arbitrary quotas and restore confidence amongst Ohioans that any citations or arrests are only made due to appropriate and legitimate interests of public safety.

I have heard it said that quotas are rare in law enforcement agencies. I can tell you, unfortunately, that they are not. In fact, they are alive and well. Few agencies actually call them a "quota." They are often disguised using terms like "performance standards," or buried in "log sheet policies" and "periodic evaluations." Sometimes they exist in a simple instructive letter or email. Sometimes, they are not in writing at all, and are enforced arbitrarily against officers who wish to remain on a specialized unit, get promoted, get a positive performance review, maintain their schedule, or even just their employment. This bill would prohibit the use of quotas for those reasons, no matter that they're called or how they're disguised from the community.

Quotas often exist because an executive like a Mayor or Trustee wants to fill budget gaps, and tells a Police Chief that they need more citations and arrests. They sometimes exist because a Chief wants to impress their boss. They *always* exist due to revenue. There is no safety-based justification to them at all. In fact, officers who have quotas imposed on them inevitably get into very negative, needless and oftentimes dangerous interactions with the public. Quotas are inexorably married to citations and arrests for minor violations that would normally never even

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merit a stop, and unfortunately, in other jurisdictions, have been linked to situations where an offense did not even occur. This is why quotas bring up serious constitutional questions of due process.

When the City of Independence imposed a clear, written quota on their police officers, morale plummeted. Ethical, morally sound officers questioned their use and legality to department leadership. Good police officers were threatened with removal from specialized units that are vitally necessary to the community, such as a regional task force combating *human trafficking*, of all things. Increased traffic citation production for very minor violations led to complaints from the community, and the department's response to officers was to target areas where more non-residents would be cited. The media found out about the scheme, and the department accused certain officers of leaking information, spurring a series of disciplinary hearings, confrontations with resident and the media, and even constructive terminations. The city's aggressiveness in keeping their quota a secret from the community led to a lawsuit and significant cash settlement with a police officer whose long, successful career ended abruptly all because he was suspected of notifying the community, through the media, of the ticket quota. Neither the honorable Independence police officers nor the community deserved that.

I can assure you that what happened in Independence is not an anomaly. Many of our members have reported that quotas exist in some way at their agencies. Due to what occurred in Independence, however, few are willing to be the ones to put their names behind the sharing of a department policy or directive mandating the practice. Some officers who have provided written evidence to us were adamant that they and even the name of their agency remain anonymous. We have shared some examples of those policies and letters with this committee. It is regretful that a police officer would face such extreme backlash after reporting such a matter of public concern to the media, to the community, to their union, or to another agency to investigate. We are therefore appreciative of the provision in this bill that allows for a police officer to report a quota to the Attorney General anonymously for investigation.

When agencies arbitrarily dictate a certain number of arrests or citations that an officer must issue to keep their job, the trust between the public and law enforcement, as well as the very nature of constitutional policing, is needlessly tested. Ohioans must be assured that any citation or arrest is valid, legitimate, and necessary. Police Officers, Sheriff's Deputies and Troopers are true professionals who risk their lives to serve our communities, not revenue generators. They got into this business to protect our neighborhoods, not occupy them. We are thankful that this committee is tackling this important issue, and urge you to pass this bill and end the practice of quotas in Ohio.

Thank you for having the Ohio PBA here today. I am happy to take any of your questions.

Sincerely,



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Director of Organization
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