

## Kelsie Miller Proponent Testimony – HB 261

If there is nothing else you or your executive staff read today, please let it be this.

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 261 EMS Workers-OPERS. As the Wife of a Cleveland EMS Paramedic, I would like to share firsthand the impact you are empowered to catalyze with your support of this Bill.

I've included context specific to Cleveland EMS at the end of this letter but my intent in writing you is not to overwhelm you with information that you already have access to. I'm writing today to share what your support for this Bill means to my Husband, a dedicated Paramedic for the City of Cleveland and our family. I met my now husband when he was fresh out of EMS Academy with Cleveland- he was bright, kind, and immensely proud of the city he would have the opportunity to serve. As a fellow paramedic, I know firsthand that after your first "hard" call, it takes a toll on you. Maybe it was a terrible tragedy with an innocent child or an accident late at night on the highway, but no matter the call...it's always easier in the beginning. Year after year, though, the inevitable calls continue to come and my husband, Ben, is always one of many who are ready to respond and help. One year, he won an award for his interventions in a premature birth that happened in the field. Anyone who read the news article would know how brave and kind he was in the moment but no one else knew about the nightmares he had for months or the flashbacks he still gets on occasion. The years continued and the calls never got any easier. He is not the exception among his peers to witness unimaginable things.

Ben knows that challenges like that are part of the job. He knows the good he does outweighs the heaviness he feels in his mind and on his shoulders. But. We have a daughter now, she'll be 7 this year and Ben lives for the day when he can retire and make the most of his days with our little family. Being so close to life and death, hurt, and hardship, that perhaps you've never known, or maybe you have, creates this utmost need and desire to spend your life with the ones you love. Ben isn't asking for anything that isn't already the bare minimum for every other public service entity in all of Ohio. Your support for this Bill doesn't just support Ben, it supports all other 270 Paramedics who like him, want to serve their city and retire after 25 years. Ultimately, this Bill would support our Paramedics today and in future generations. That 5-year difference for their retirement is about ensuring our Paramedics do not retire as a burnt-out shell of the bright, passionate Paramedics they all started as. You have the power to support this and quite frankly, when it comes to our First Responders, there is no valid reason not to.

House Bill 261 is a crucial piece of legislation that addresses the definition of "Public Safety Officer" in the O.R.C. 145.01 (AAA) and seeks to include single-role Paramedics, so they also have the opportunity to be afforded a 25-year retirement, equivalent to the standard of what every other Public Serving Paramedic receives currently in the state of Ohio. The original ruling of a 25-year retirement for Public Safety Officers was rooted in the knowledge that our responders in Fire, Police, and EMS, face extraordinary circumstances over the time of their service. Specifically, these include multiple traumatic 911 calls, on-the-job assaults and injuries from patients, extended shifts, and long days away from family. CEMS was excluded from this verbiage and as such, this benefit, by nothing more than an oversight in the current Bill as it exists, today. And yet, as a result of that oversight, over 270 Paramedics and EMTs, are not given the support they need and most definitely have worked to deserve.