



INTERESTED PARTY TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 33

Keary McCarthy, Executive Director

March 22, 2023

Chair Miller, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Public Safety, my name is Keary McCarthy and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Mayors Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's largest cities and suburbs. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the public safety provisions in House Bill 33. We are testifying as an interested party at this phase of the process, but as you will see from our testimony, we are supportive of many of the public safety provisions in HB 33.

Public safety is a critical priority for our mayors and police chiefs, and we appreciate the investments that have been proposed in HB 33. For municipalities across the state, public safety is almost always the largest single budgetary expenditure. In some cases, particularly for larger cities, public safety accounts for between 55 and 65 percent of the total general revenue fund budget. Just in Ohio's 30 largest cities, the total amount spent on public safety on an annual basis is over \$2.1 billion dollars. Personnel costs make up a significant share of these total costs and the demand on cities to attract, recruit, and retain law enforcement professionals has never been higher or more challenging.

In response to this challenge, our cities have increased pay and benefits to their law enforcement professionals. This includes utilizing federal resources provided directly to cities through the American Rescue Plan for hazard pay to first responders and retention bonuses to keep high-quality officers on the job. Our cities are also grateful for the funds provided to local law enforcement through the various state grant programs. Thus far, our cities have received \$35 million in state grants for body-worn cameras, first-responder wellness programs, and violent crime reduction and community violence intervention strategies.

We appreciate the partnership that our cities have had with the administration and the state legislature on these public safety grants. Given that public safety is the largest municipal expenditure, we are grateful for additional funds and encourage these targeted grants to continue. We also support the additional funding provided in HB 33, which will help to address the costs to cities to continue delivering effective and efficient public safety services. I will highlight just a few of these below.

Law Enforcement Training Funding

The Ohio Mayors Alliance participated on the Law Enforcement Training Funding Study Commission, which concluded its work during the last General Assembly. We are pleased to see that HB 33 proposes \$80 million in funding over the next biennium to implement the recommendations of that commission and reimburse local law enforcement agencies across the state for training expenses. We fully support

the funding for Continued Professional Training (CPT) and are pleased to see it in the budget. We support and encourage the committee to consider an expansion of the reimbursable hours for CPT from 24 to 40. We also believe that a dedicated funding stream for CPT remains a long-term need for our cities and local law enforcement agencies.

I want to highlight the feedback we've received from the police chiefs in our cities on training funding: they have clearly communicated to us that the less restricted that reimbursement is, the more useful it is to them. For example, the chiefs told us during a recent discussion that providing them reimbursement figures per officer for training and allowing them to use those funds to pursue their ongoing training programs would be the most useful form that funding could take. They pointed out that their agencies plan out training months and even years ahead of time, and so applying for reimbursement to implement already planned training will have the most immediate impact on ensuring all of their officers and personnel can get the training they need.

Statewide Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies

Most OMA cities' police departments are already engaged with the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board and its certification programs, and many of our cities have achieved or are pursuing CALEA accreditation. Even so, our cities support HB 33's provisions that will allow the Department of Public Safety and the Ohio Attorney General to make accreditation more broadly available and accessible to the departments they collaborate with both regionally and statewide. We support this provision because increasing standards for one law enforcement agency benefits all law enforcement agencies.

Continuing funding for local law enforcement agency grant programs

As I mentioned earlier, the total cost for public safety among just Ohio's 30 largest cities is over \$2.1 billion dollars. Most of that money comes from the municipal income tax, which is generally the largest revenue stream for most municipalities. However, we are grateful for additional state funding that comes to our cities through the Local Government Fund (LGF) and the public safety grants that I mentioned previously. In the "as introduced" version of HB 33, the LGF increases slightly from 1.6 to 1.7 percent of the total state general fund. This results in an increase of the total LGF to \$505 million in FY 24 and \$530 million in FY25, which is dispersed to counties, cities, and townships. Given the significant cost to cities to support public safety, we would urge the committee to consider an additional increase in the total LGF allocation.

We also support continuing the targeted public safety grant funding in the next biennium for, in particular, crime reduction, recruitment and retention, and body-worn cameras. In fact, we urge you to consider making these grant programs permanent and ensuring that state and local leaders continue to work together to ensure that our public safety forces and first responders have the tools, support, and equipment they need to do their jobs effectively and to help keep our streets safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.