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SB53 135GA Opponent Testimony

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts and input on SB53 135th GA regarding the change of age from 21 years old to 18 years old for entry level police officers in the state of Ohio.

My name is Tim, I'm a retired Law Enforcement Officer of 20 years and a United States Air Force Veteran. In both of these careers I had the honor and privilege of being a Field Training Officer and Senior Field Instructor. I spent 15 years as a Field Training Officer in Law Enforcement training new recruits coming into the department and seasoned officers on updated training practices. In the Air Force my training was focused on tactical support responses and counter terrorism tactics.

While I applaud the need to address the law enforcement workforce pool shortages and the intentions to put more officers on the streets of Ohio I believe two questions of concern arise, the WHY and the WHAT.

Why have we seen a mass exodus in and a lack of applicants for this professional career field? A lack of effective incentives, over restrictive recruiting practices (?), societal perception (?) and self inflicted pejorative incidents (?) could be the WHY. First to recognize is the final determining factor in hiring new officers for any department be it a township, village, municipality or sheriff department is, "are the funds available" to do so? You can change the age to hire however, that does not provide the financial resources a department needs to hire applicants. As being discussed currently in **SB35**, senate finance committee, to provide funds for equipment and CEU's training sends a signal departments lack a supportive tax base budget to employ additional officers, maintain their salaries and continue their professional educational standards. Further noted is the hundreds of millions of dollars granted to Law Enforcement yearly for special task force operations and for enhanced traffic enforcement, simply because department salary funds are not there in the general budget funds.

What might be effective avenues to attract more applicants for hire? Respect for professional recognition through higher entry level salaries (?), mandatory higher levels of education, prior military experience and an older age in life's maturity timeline could be the WHAT.

What has been presented, and in respect to these officers voluntary choice, is a handful of non-civil service departments who have hired a few applicants

directly out of high school with no higher educational level, with few life's experiences, with less than two years experience operating a motor vehicle, and with very few matured people skills. Many departments in Ohio now require a minimum of an associate degree or military experience. This practice ensures the applicant has grown and developed in maturity behaviors, actions and practices. To simply believe lowering the age will fill this shortage is impractical.

I believe this bill is a perceived quick shortcut fix for the need of applicants in a highly violent and hazardous career field which may lead to serious harmful outcomes. We are talking about our children right out of high school with this rule change. And as we have seen and heard in previous testimony, these applicants are not only our sons (?) coming out of high school, but rather our daughters as well. To think that our children will now be policing our communities is shocking and terrifying. Can we let them grow up first?

As a law enforcement officer one must wear many hats; first as a high priority decision maker, a mental therapist, one of medical knowledge, a hat of faith, a negotiator of domestics, one with compassion/empathy, a hat to calm social unrest and more. An officer's authoritative duties may mean to revoke civil privileges, to restrain from freedom, to detain, to arrest, to use force, to protect life as well as take a life. An officer's jurisdictional boundaries fall within our communities, our neighborhoods, our businesses, our schools, our places of worship and places of social entertainment. In many rural areas of jurisdiction officers will find themselves responding to a variety of service calls (?) in a solo capacity with mutual aid support five minutes plus out. (?)

The military comparisons we have heard as well holds no validity. As a soldier one is trained to intervene in world conflicts, foreign disruptions, and may find themselves in a war in a desert, a jungle, or a bombed out community in a combat situation. Military personnel fall under the Uniform Code of Military Justice rules and laws unlike civilian police officers who fall under the US and state constitution rules and laws. In the military a soldier is with constant supervision and other soldiers for immediate support.

The comparison of firefighters and EMS with police is indefensible when comparing the duties of each professional career field. Society views firefighters and EMS as a service to help and assist with unforeseen incidents. While police are viewed as a figure of authority with powers to command, to arrest, to take from and to enforce the laws of society.

With respect I ask for good faith research of other avenues to address this career workforce pool shortage to be considered for implementation.

Again I thank you for bringing attention to this topic and ask that you share a no vote on this bill.

I am open to any questions regarding my input on this bill.

In Safety,

Tim Johnson



Sharing a few articles to topic

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-training-us-falls-short-compared-rest-world/story?id=96729748>Sincerely,

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-teen-brain-7-things-to-know>

<https://www.lawfareblog.com/how-young-too-young-be-police-officer>

<https://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/the-uniform-code-of-military-justice-ucmj.html>

<https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-constitution>