



# OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*State Representative Andrea White*

HB 56 – Sponsor Testimony  
House Criminal Justice Committee  
2/28/24

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 56. A little more than a year ago, in the early hours of a cold January morning, hundreds of people gathered at the corner of a major intersection in downtown Dayton summoned by social media. Dozens of cars were strategically parked to block the streets to create a stage of sorts. And then what police have called a “pop-up street takeover” began – as reckless drivers in high-performance cars screeched and careened dangerously close to the watching crowd doing doughnuts and burnouts with people carelessly hanging out windows, doors and even the hood of a car. Pulled off other emergent calls, law enforcement began arriving and eventually the “hooning” drivers fled from the scene – later gathering at two other prearranged spots to take over streets in two other jurisdictions before dawn broke. Fortunately, no one was hurt that night. Amazingly, not even the people standing in the middle of the speeding circles of cars filming and posting the event online. That’s not always the case.

In case you’re unfamiliar with the practice which has terrorized neighborhoods and streets throughout Ohio and the U.S., the word “hooning” appears to trace to Australian terms referring to reckless drivers and driving that creates hazards on our streets. Originally, HB56, added new language to the ORC that defined “hooning” as “operation of a motor vehicle in a reckless or dangerous manner to provoke a reaction to spectators by speeding; street racing; performing donuts, burnouts, drifting, rapid accelerations, squealing tires, or engine revving; or allowing passengers to ride partially or fully outside of the motor vehicle. As the bill moved its way through the committee process in the House, our colleagues, as well as other interested parties, suggested that we instead expand already existing Ohio revised code regarding street racing to include all of the elements that we had originally defined as “hooning” along with stunt driving and street takeover.

HB 56 attempts to crack down on these practices by creating new consequences for those who participate as an operator or passenger of the motor vehicle. Additionally, this bill would prohibit a person from knowingly and actively participating in a street take over blocking or impeding the flow of traffic for the purposes of street racing or stunt driving. This language was changed in the committee process to clarify that spectators caught in the wrong place at the wrong time would not be charged.

The bill also increases the penalties for the offenses of willfully eluding or fleeing a police officer using a motor vehicle and strengthens the code regarding law enforcement entities having a written pursuit policy by requiring them to consider pursuit policy standards and best practice recommendations from the Ohio Collaborative Community – Police Advisory Board or a similar

accrediting entity when crafting their policies and to ensure all officers are trained on the policy.

I want to emphasize that we are bringing this bill to you at the request of local law enforcement officials and elected city leaders who are asking us for more tools to combat this social media/internet fueled craze of reckless driving and street takeover that has already injured lives, terrorized citizens, resulted in significant property damage, and wasted precious law enforcement time and dollars that could be spent protecting and responding to other crises throughout our cities and townships. Multiple jurisdictions are dealing with this issue – at times with the same crew in the same night speeding from city to city and crossing county or state lines. Aviation resources and dollars from the Ohio State Patrol have been activated to assist and cities are spending money not only on staff overtime, but on installing all sorts of speed deterrent devices in an attempt to make roadways more safe and unattractive to the practice of drag racing and reckless driving. On one particularly long stretch of straight road in Dayton, the city has invested over \$400,000 in safety upgrades such as cement barricades, speed cushions, speed tables or piano key-type markings and countdown signals at intersections to try to deter the drag racing, donuts and 360's that were threatening drivers on multiple occasions last summer.

This problem is not unique to our region with incidents occurring in multiple Ohio cities. At one point last year looking out my office window in the Riffe, you could see burned circles of tires at the corner of State and High. A "hooning" incident last fall in Cincinnati's Lytle Tunnel brought traffic to a halt on I-71 one evening for 10 minutes. And last summer, Cleveland experienced a massive pack of dirt bikes, ATVs and other vehicles taking over streets. These are just a few of the many incidents plaguing our cities. We need to support our local communities looking for a statewide solution to this problem. One that doesn't offer a patchwork of local ordinances that can be used by cities and townships alike. Our roadways are made for transit to school, to work, to the store, to bring people to opportunities, not for this type of activity that risks injury to lives and property – not only to those involved but to innocent people who may be caught in harm's way by fleeing vehicles.

We urge you to support House Bill 56 and to give our communities the tools they are asking for to keep our residents safe and our roadways secure. Thank you again for allowing us to testify and Representative Plummer will provide more details on the bill's specifics now.