



May 22, 2024

Dear Chairman Manning & Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

We write today to share our support for S.B. 223 – the *Fight Organized Retail Crime & Empower Law Enforcement (FORCE) Act*. This legislation will establish a statewide task force to provide resources and support to local law enforcement and prosecutors to help combat increasing incidences of organized retail crime (ORC) in our communities. The FORCE Act will update Ohio law to enhance real-time information sharing among asset protection professionals and law enforcement, and allow for the aggregation of offenses showing a clear pattern of behavior that differentiates ORC from petty shoplifting.

As a Midwest retailer operating in six states, Meijer has witnessed the success of other state ORC task forces firsthand. Since Michigan established its FORCE Team and Organized Retail Crime Unit within the Department of the Attorney General in early 2023, Meijer Asset Protection and its retail partners have been able to collaborate with law enforcement to apprehend criminals that have threatened the safety of our customers, team members and communities.

- In one investigation involving stolen video games, Meijer Asset Protection documented nearly 100 theft incidents over a two-year timeframe spanning six different states (including Ohio). This ORC ring involved 20 individuals whose theft resulted in nearly \$100,000 in losses. Through FORCE Act provisions, Michigan’s Attorney General was able to aggregate offenses, resulting in a 20-year felony charge.
- Another ORC ring in Michigan involved 85 separate thefts over four months across seven different counties with evidence of online resale. The FORCE Team was able to aggregate all offenses and work with a special prosecutor from the Department of the Attorney General to convict individuals on one count each of felony ORC. The FORCE Act required a single police report (rather than 85 individual reports) and one court (rather than several courts) and allowed for streamlined and timely restitution to victims.

These are only two of the many successes Meijer and others have experienced in partnership with Michigan’s FORCE Team. It is truly impressive to see the progress that has been made in such a short time, and we hope to see Ohio embrace the ORC task force model by adopting S.B. 223. We respectfully ask you to support this critical legislation. If you have any questions regarding our experience, please do not hesitate to contact me at Andrew.Martin@meijer.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Martin", written over a white background.

Andrew Martin
Meijer Government Affairs Manager