



DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

Policy & Legislation

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Senate Judiciary Committee
Corey Jordan, Director of Policy and Legislation

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 366, the “Fight Organized Retail Crime and Empower Law Enforcement (FORCE) Act.” My name is Corey Jordan, and I am the Director of Policy and Legislation for the Ohio Attorney General’s Office (AGO) here today testifying on behalf of Attorney General Dave Yost.

In the past five years, organized retail theft has seen a sharp increase, with 57% of retailers reporting an uptick in incidents. This affects large and small businesses, customers, and local law enforcement. The second-order consequences of these crime rings are numerous – loss of revenue, increased prices for consumers, products not being available in stores, and police responding to incidents instead of patrolling our communities. Everyone is affected by such schemes.

The FORCE Act would give the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission (OCIC), which is under the AGO, the authority to create new task forces focusing exclusively on retail crime rings. The task forces would include local law enforcement, BCI agents, as well as other state and federal agencies. By focusing resources on the larger organizations committing theft, we will be able to root out the individuals directing and profiting off retail theft, instead of responding to individual incidents at stores. This allows law enforcement to be proactive, rather than reactive.

The bill would also create the Organized Retail Theft Advisory Council within OCIC. Under the language, the Council’s duties would include advising the OCIC task force, educating retailers about how to curb theft, and informing consumers about organized retail theft. This piece is critical to ensure state government is not only listening to the concerns of our retail partners, but is also able to be responsive to them.

The AGO is also respectfully requesting a few changes to the bill as it currently reads. First, we would recommend the removal of the President of the Council of Retail Merchants from the OCIC task force. By including non-law enforcement members on the task force, OCIC’s investigations would no longer be confidential, which would actively work against the goals of this legislation. Secondly, we would urge this committee to reinsert the appropriation for the retail crime task force. While we are incredibly appreciative of the permanent funding stream for this task force, it could take time to accumulate enough funds to get the task force running at full strength. Inclusion of the appropriation would enable the task force to hit the ground running on day one.

HB 366 would give law enforcement new resources to fight back against retail theft. The AGO has collaborated extensively on this bill with the Ohio Council of Retail Merchants, Ohio Chamber of Commerce, law enforcement, and legislators. I applaud Representative Ghanbari and Senator Lang for their leadership and willingness to work with many interested parties on the FORCE Act. Thank



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you again for providing me the opportunity to testify today. I'd be happy to take any questions at this time.