

The Honorable Stephanie Kunze  
The Ohio Senate  
1 Capitol Square  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 129  
Columbus, OH 43215

March 7, 2023

RE: Sub HB 23 (changes to ORC 4511.093)

Dear Senator Kunze,

I am writing to you as President/Chair of the Liberty Township Board of Trustees. Our township has a population of over 20,000 residents, covers over 20 square miles, and is one of the few “home rule” townships in the State of Ohio. We are located in Trumbull county, north of Youngstown, and have Interstate 80, State Route 11, and State Route 711 that run through our borders.

Liberty township has both a full-time fire department and police department, which serve as first responders not only for our residents but also for any travelers on the above-mentioned highways. The volume of calls for service to our safety forces is increasing year-to-year, is among the highest in Trumbull County, and requires an ever-increasing amount of staffing to meet the needs of the public. To fulfill these demands, Liberty township utilizes a traffic camera program, which is operated by a full-time commissioned police officer.

We understand proponents of removing townships ability to use these devices may use a revenue generated argument. However, with the highways located in our community, we have many people outside the community, and even the state that use our roads. We are already one of the highest “levied” townships in the county, and we have not used any revenue generated by the photo-enforcement program to increase salaries or benefits. We pride ourselves on being fiscally responsible, and invest in community events and community projects. We invest in our infrastructure, “local match” funds, required paving projects, and upgrade the safety force’s equipment that is used daily.

Our safety forces have built a trust between themselves and our residents and has been an integral part of community-oriented policing. The feedback we have received is so positive that it has counteracted any negative stigma from the “traffic cams.” In fact, our residents have learned that the revenue generated from the photo-enforcement program has contributed to an aggressive paving program, one that allows us to address neighborhood streets that had been neglected for an entire generation.

Should this language be included in the final bill, our police force will be decimated. We will have to lay off 4-7 officers. To reiterate, we have not increased salaries and benefits, as mentioned above, but we have increased our staffing from 14 full-time officers to 21 full-time officers, including our Chief, Captain and Detectives. We also have also been able to commission two canines, Leo & Shelby, to help interdict the deadly fentanyl reaching every community, which is necessary because of our location.

Therefore, it is with a heavy heart that I must implore you, to remove the language in Sub HB 23 removing township's ability to utilize traffic law photo-monitoring device to enforce traffic law violations. This language is punitive in nature and was thrust upon us without any advance notice or discussion. It does include the courtesy of a "sunset provision" or "grandfather provision" and is without any consideration of our Home Rule Status. Moreover, Liberty Township may be the only Home Rule Township that this proposal affects. Why are we being targeted by such a provision? Why can Cities across Ohio still utilize this program and others like it but we cannot?

We understand we are at the will of the General Assembly, however please consider alternatives such as:

- exemptions for Home Rule Townships.
- a requirement that an officer must be actively operating the camera/radar device.
- a threshold of speeding that exceeds 10 mph.
- requiring a "chase car" for those driving recklessly at 20-30mph above the stated speed limit.
- some form of sunset provision so that we have time to address the impact on our budget.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,  
Devon A. Stanley, Esq.

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