



LORAIN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Jim McCann | Chief of Police

HONOR • RESPECT • PUBLIC SERVICE

June 23, 2024

RE: Ohio H. B. 241 - Regards Police Department Vacancies

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, and Ranking Member Craig for allowing me to speak in favor of HB 241 today. I stand before you to address a pressing issue that affects the safety and well-being of our communities—the recruitment of law enforcement officers, especially in statutory cities. In recent years, we have faced significant challenges in attracting and retaining qualified individuals to serve as police officers. This issue is not just a matter of filling vacancies but of ensuring that our police forces are reflective of the communities they serve and are equipped to handle the complexities of modern policing.

In 1992 when I took the civil service exam, there were approximately 300 applicants. In 2023 there were a total of 14 applicants. In 2024 there were 15 applicants. The Law Enforcement service is in a recruitment CRISIS with no viable solution. If we as

a state do not find a way to creatively deal with this issue, we will have no choice but lower the standards just to recruit entry level police officers, jeopardizing public safety.

The recruitment problem seems to be more acute in statutory cities, which often struggle to compete with charter cities in attracting applicants, especially locally. Charter cities typically have less restrictions on recruitment and hiring practices, giving them an edge in attracting the best candidates. This disparity creates an uneven playing field, resulting in statutory cities being understaffed and, consequently, less capable of effectively serving their communities.

To address this imbalance and bolster our law enforcement agencies, we propose the creation of a meaningful cadet program specifically designed to recruit graduating high school seniors who have reached the age of 18 from our local high schools and surrounding colleges to enter the program. This program aims to tap into the potential of young individuals who are passionate about serving their communities and provide them with a structured path to a career in law enforcement. However, without the passage of H.B. 241 or similar measures, there can be no meaningful cadet program in a statutory city. The end result would be time and money wasted because the charter cities will soon see the benefit of a well-trained cadet and lure them away with a signing bonus and a direct appointment.

The proposed cadet program would involve the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission (OPOTC) to ensure that cadet training counts towards their mandatory

academy training. By integrating the cadet program with OPOTC's standards, we can provide a seamless transition from cadet to fully certified police officer, thereby reducing the time and cost associated with traditional police training pathways.

Here are some key benefits and components of the cadet program:

1. **Early Engagement and Recruitment:** By targeting high school seniors and college students, we can engage potential recruits at an early stage, fostering their interest in law enforcement careers. Early engagement allows us to identify and nurture talent, providing mentorship and guidance to students who might otherwise pursue different career paths.
2. **Educational and Practical Training:** The program will offer a blend of academic education and practical training. Cadets will learn about criminal justice, ethics, community relations, and the legal aspects of policing. Additionally, they will participate in hands-on training exercises that simulate real-life scenarios, preparing them for the challenges they will face as police officers.
3. **Leveling the Recruitment Playing Field:** By establishing a cadet program that is accessible to students from all backgrounds, we can level the recruitment playing field between charter and statutory cities. This initiative will help statutory cities attract a diverse pool of local candidates, ensuring that their police forces are representative of the communities they serve.

4. **Collaboration with OPOTC:** The involvement of the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission is crucial to the program's success. OPOTC's endorsement means that cadet training will meet the high standards required for police certification. Cadets who complete the program and subsequently attend the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy will be well-prepared and eligible for appointment as police officers.
5. **Community Involvement and Support:** The program will encourage community involvement, fostering stronger relationships between the police and the communities they serve. By engaging community leaders, educators, and local businesses, we can build a support network that enhances the program's effectiveness and sustainability.
6. **Career Advancement Opportunities:** The cadet program will not only prepare individuals for entry-level positions but also provide a foundation for career advancement within law enforcement. By equipping cadets with a broad skill set and comprehensive training, we can create a pipeline of future leaders who are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.

In conclusion, creating a pathway to exceptionally appoint a police applicant by means of possessing a specialized certification, having exceptional qualifications, or completing a police cadet training program is a strategic and necessary step towards addressing the recruitment challenges faced by statutory cities like Lorain. By leveling the playing field

and providing structured training and mentorship to young adults, we can attract and retain a diverse and capable workforce dedicated to serving and protecting our communities.

I urge all stakeholders — government officials, law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, and community leaders — to support this initiative. Together, we can create a brighter future for our cities and ensure that our law enforcement agencies are well-trained and well-equipped to meet the demands of modern policing.

Thank you.