



**Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
House Bill 88 – Proponent Testimony
House Judiciary Committee**

Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony today on HB 88.

My name is Heinz von Eckartsberg. I am the retired Chief of Police in Dublin, Ohio and most recently, the assistant superintendent of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation. I am testifying today on behalf of the membership of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police.

The Chiefs Association applauds the efforts of Representatives Abrams and Plummer for sponsoring this bill in an effort to fight the scourge of drugs and human trafficking affecting our state, as it is affecting all of the United States.

In 2023 (the most recent year with complete data available), just under 80% of all drug overdose deaths in our state, and 95% of opioid drug overdose deaths involved fentanyl¹. As you know, drug dealers mix fentanyl with many types of commonly used street drugs such as methamphetamine, cocaine, and fake prescription medication pills. It is impossible for users of these drugs to know if what they are taking has been mixed with deadly synthetic opioids without actually testing them. Thus, nearly every user of recreational drugs is at risk for an unintentional fentanyl overdose. Unfortunately, this has resulted in the crisis of overdose deaths we have seen skyrocket in recent years.

The crisis on our southern border has exacerbated this problem because of the persistent efforts of the cartels to bring these drugs, including fentanyl, cocaine and methamphetamine into the US. As the sponsors of this bill have seen first-hand, these efforts routinely result in traffickers making their way to all corners of the U.S., including our great state of Ohio.

As Representatives Abrams and Plummer stressed in their sponsor testimony, this bill is not about immigration. It is, however, about increasing the deterrent effects of Ohio law to discourage the continuing influx of these drugs into the Buckeye state.

We are strongly in favor of the provisions in this bill that will increase the penalties for trafficking in cocaine, fentanyl, heroin and methamphetamine. We also strongly support the provisions in this bill that expand the definition of human trafficking, in an effort to stop the flow of these drugs into Ohio. We also strongly support the specification of a mandatory prison term

of 5 years for any individual convicted of, or who pleads guilty to causing a fentanyl-related death.

Again, we applaud the efforts of the sponsors to provide Ohio law enforcement with the tools we need to combat the scourge of drug-related crime in Ohio.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share testimony on behalf of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee at this time.

¹ Ohio Department of Health. 2024 Quarter One: 2024. Ohio Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths.
https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/a7816795-869f-4113-808c-dc83d695d188/Ohio+Quarterly+Overdose+Report_Preliminary+Data_For+Release+Q3+2024.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_K9I401S01H7F40QBNJU3SO1F56-a7816795-869f-4113-808c-dc83d695d188-p5.BHiD