



Ohio State Highway Patrol
Testimony of Lieutenant Colonel Joshua Swindell
House Bill 88 – House Judiciary Committee
March 19, 2025

Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Judiciary Committee – I am Lieutenant Colonel Joshua Swindell, assistant superintendent of the Ohio State Highway Patrol. It is my honor to appear before you today to provide support for House Bill 88. This bill will provide meaningful tools to assist law enforcement in combatting human and drug trafficking.

Ohio state troopers average one million traffic contacts every year. This places us in a unique position to interdict criminal activity and disrupt criminal organizations that use our roadways to further their objectives. A trooper's view of trafficking cases usually begins through a traffic stop. Often times, these cases begin with minor traffic violations, where a trooper pulled someone over. I'd like to share a few recent examples of how criminal organizations are using Ohio's roadways:

One recent example occurred when a trooper stopped a Toyota minivan on the Ohio Turnpike for a cracked windshield violation. The trooper found 11 persons inside the vehicle which was designed to seat seven. Upon questioning the occupants, it was discovered none possessed documents to identify themselves. With the assistance of the U.S. Border Patrol, it was determined all had entered the country unlawfully.

Troopers also discovered a large quantity of cash hidden within the driver's clothing. Further interviews revealed the passengers, or their family members, had paid for them to be driven from Albuquerque, New Mexico to various states along the east coast including Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and Florida. The driver, who had been previously deported more than 40 times, was turned over to Border Patrol Agents to be charged under Federal Alien Smuggling laws.

In another instance, a trooper stopped a Texas registered pickup for a speed violation on Interstate 70. After a K-9 alerted to the vehicle, a search revealed several boxes of firearms in the bed of the truck. There were 4 AK-47's, 4 shotguns, 7 AR-15's, and 31 pistols. The guns were packaged in boxes and covered in foil enroute to cross the Mexico border.

A passenger in the vehicle, who claimed possession of the firearms, was discovered to be in the country illegally and was in violation of federal firearm regulations. Ultimately, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives adopted the case and the passenger was released to the custody of Homeland Security Investigations.

I also want to touch on the topic of drug trafficking.

Over the past two years, troopers made nearly 11,000 drug arrests. These arrests include large and small amounts of illicit drugs, and many of the numbers are significant.

Between 2023 and 2024, troopers interdicted more than 21,000 pounds of marijuana, more than 1,300 pounds of cocaine, nearly 900 pounds of methamphetamine and more than 200 pounds of fentanyl – preventing these dangerous drugs from potentially reaching our communities. Troopers also seized more than 42,000 dosage units of opiate pills.

Several of our illegal drug seizures last year were among the largest in the Patrol's history. I want to share one of those significant seizures.

Last August, a trooper stopped a commercial vehicle on Interstate 70 for a speed violation. A Patrol drug-detecting canine alerted to the vehicle, and a probable cause search revealed nearly 300 pounds of methamphetamine in cardboard boxes in the trailer. This stop is the second largest methamphetamine seizure in our history.

These are real life examples of criminal organizations who are methodically operating in our state and our country. They use our roadways in furtherance of their criminal enterprises. Their goal is profits. They have no regard for the quality of life or the safety of our residents. No community is immune from being affected by their operations.

Chairman Thomas and members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you again for today's opportunity to testify on behalf of the Ohio State Highway Patrol in support of House Bill 88. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.