



SHERIFF

WAYNE COUNTY

June 9, 2025

Greetings Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 132, also known as Philip Wigal's Law.

On April 12, 2022, 35-year-old Philip M. Wigal, a Lieutenant with the Town & Country Fire District, was struck and killed while on a scene of a traffic accident on I-71 in Wayne County. Working traffic accidents, along with disabled vehicles/traffic hazards, are part of our jobs as law enforcement, firefighters, EMS personnel, and county and state employees. With that said, we also know that county, state, and interstate roads are very dangerous due to debris in the roadway, narrow roadways, distracted driving, driving under the influence, and speed. All these escalate the risks we all take on.

We as law enforcement, fire departments, and EMS are responsible for the safety of the individuals that need our assistance on the roadways as well. Many times, our backs are turned towards on-coming traffic; that puts our safety more at risk. There are many cases like this one where law enforcement, fire/EMS personnel have been seriously injured and like Philip Wigal even killed. We know the risk while doing this career and serving others in need, however, creating or updating laws to help protect safety service personnel while on the roadway is beneficial for all involved.

I strongly believe that most safety service personnel can provide information regarding incidents of close encounters and even being struck themselves. As the Sheriff, I feel that the current law is not strong enough. I feel that stricter penalties on first time offenders should have mandatory consequences imposed. Failure to move over starts at the lowest level of degree (Minor Misdemeanor) it's disappointing that members of the safety service community have to be seriously injured or killed to have this conversation.

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We respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 132. Thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent today. We welcome any questions from the committee at this time.

Respectfully,

Sheriff Thomas Ballinger

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