

Good morning. Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 132, also known as Philip Wigal's Law. I'd also like to thank Representative Miller for bringing this important legislative proposal to the committee's attention.

Charged with the protection and safety of Ashland County, I feel compelled to address this body in support of this proposed legislation. All too often, particularly in recent years, our State has suffered the loss of too many public servants as a result of inattentive drivers and irresponsible driving habits. These brave men and women dedicate their lives to the protection and service of others, and we owe them, their families and every public service worker across this great State, a strict measure of safety and accountability while they are serving us.

This particular bill hits very close to home as Lt. Wigal was struck down just miles outside of Ashland County. I, like many other office holders and leaders of various public safety agencies, sleep lightly at night in hope our staff remains safe, and returns home to their families. HB 132 will help me and other public safety leaders sleep better at night, knowing our members have been given another tool to help keep them safe.

For those of you who have never had to experience the thrush of air, nearly forcing you off your feet, or the sense of claustrophobia from a close encounter with a fast moving vehicle as it blows by you along the roadside, I can assure you that the fear of being struck by a vehicle is real. Assisting people on the roadways should be the focus of our emergency responders, without being distracted by negligent drivers. If my deputies are more focused on being struck by a vehicle than the task at hand, they are not focused on their primary responsibility of protecting and serving the public.

Lt. Wigal was performing his duty in service of others. Countless other emergency and public service responders, day in and day out, continue to answer the call for help along our roadways, and they should feel safe and know that our laws are sound and stern enough to protect them. All traffic fatalities, just like Lt. Wigal, are preventable and this bill will help strengthen

the message to all drivers that they should not only be focused while driving, but they will be held accountable for negligent driving habits.

Deterrence and accountability go hand-in-hand. Ohio should adopt these increased measures of accountability to better protect our first responders, emergency personnel and other public service workers who are continually working on and along our roadsides.

I urge this committee and body to wholly support and enact House Bill 132. By passing this bill, you are sending a strong message of support to those who risk everything to protect all of us. You are sending a message to the families of our emergency and public service workers that we will do everything we can to make sure you see your loved ones after every shift. Thank you Chairman Thomas and members of the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony.

Kurt J. Schneider, Sheriff

Ashland County Sheriff's Office