Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
House Bill 473 – Opponent Testimony
House Public Insurance and Pensions Committee

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Teska, Ranking Member White, and members of the House Public Insurance and Pensions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony regarding House Bill 473.

My name is Heinz von Eckartsberg. I am the retired Chief of the Dublin Police Department and also previously served as Assistant Superintendent of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation. I am here today on behalf of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, representing law enforcement leaders across our state.

Our Association respectfully but strongly opposes House Bill 473, which would prohibit public employers from paying employee pension contributions and remove this issue from collective bargaining. We oppose this bill for several key reasons.

First, as this committee is aware, law enforcement agencies in Ohio and across the country continue to struggle with recruiting and retaining qualified officers. Local governments have worked diligently to create competitive compensation packages to attract good people to a demanding profession—one that requires extensive training, high accountability, and significant investment. Pension pickup is one of the few flexible tools available to make these positions competitive. It is not a hidden benefit; it is a clearly negotiated, taxpayer-funded component of employee compensation.

Second, we feel that concerns about transparency are overstated. Under the employer pickup model, the employer assumes part or all of the employee's contribution. Even when hourly wages remain unchanged, this results in higher overall compensation for the employee. These arrangements are fully disclosed in collective bargaining agreements and budget documents. They are not hidden from the public.

Third, this legislation would override local decision-making on matters that have traditionally been—and should remain—within the authority of cities, counties, and townships. Compensation structures, when crafted within local budgets and negotiated in good faith, are best handled at the local level. These are taxpayer-funded dollars regardless of structure, and we see no compelling statewide interest that warrants removing this flexibility.

Fourth, the idea that pension pickups create unfair “bidding wars” between jurisdictions misrepresents how public-sector hiring works. Local governments already compete for qualified police officers, firefighters, and other essential employees. That competition drives professionalism and better public service. Pension pickup is simply one of several legitimate and transparent methods to make a jurisdiction more competitive in that market.

Finally, while some may argue that this practice “just doesn’t feel right,” public policy should respond to facts, not perceptions. Pension pickups have existed for decades as a well-established element of public-sector compensation. Both employers and employees weigh the advantages and disadvantages of these arrangements at the bargaining table. These decisions should remain negotiable—not prohibited by statute.

For these reasons, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police urges the committee to reject House Bill 473.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our thoughts on behalf of Ohio’s law enforcement community.