

31st House District

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Bill Roemer

State Representative

Chairwoman Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Committee on Public Safety, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of HB 210, a bill to amend sections of the Revised Code regarding the unchecked theft of catalytic converters. For too long, gaps in our laws have been overlooked on the sale of used catalytic converters to scrap metal dealers and recyclers, creating a path to catalytic converter theft in communities across Ohio and the nation.

Catalytic converters contain precious metals—platinum, palladium, and rhodium—that help reduce harmful emissions from vehicle exhaust systems. These metals carry significant street value; as of April 2nd, the price of rhodium stood at \$5,700 per ounce—a nearly 30% increase from when I last testified on this issue. Because converters can be removed quickly and quietly using a cordless saw, thieves are able to profit with minimal risk, making this a crime of opportunity that continues to escalate.

HB 210 provides real benefits for both residents and Ohio businesses. Theft of these devices has resulted in millions of dollars in damages—whether in the form of direct repair costs, increased insurance premiums, or loss of business revenue. My office has heard firsthand from business owners who have suffered repeated losses, often forced to absorb the cost or risk losing operational capacity. This bill represents a meaningful step toward protecting those who have been left vulnerable under current law.

The bill before you is the result of numerous meetings and collaborations with stakeholders including the Ohio Department of Public Safety, the Ohio Prosecuting Attorney's Association, the Attorney General's Office, Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, and many others. This bill was HB 328 of the 135th General Assembly, which passed this committee unanimously then the House overwhelmingly 93-2.

To address this growing problem, HB 210 sets forth critical reforms to ensure accountability in the sale and purchase of catalytic converters. The bill requires scrap metal dealers and recyclers to maintain detailed records of all catalytic converter transactions, including the seller's identity, vehicle information, and proof of ownership. It also mandates that these transactions be reported to law enforcement via the Ohio Homeland Security database, giving law enforcement better tools to track and investigate theft.

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The bill also aims to level the playing field between registered, law-abiding scrap metal dealers and those operating outside of the law. Currently, unregistered or “pop-up” buyers can exploit gaps in reporting requirements and avoid scrutiny, making it difficult for law enforcement to follow the trail of stolen parts. By strengthening investigative tools and requiring consistent documentation and reporting across the board, HB 210 ensures that all actors in this space are held to the same standards. This levels the marketplace and enhances enforcement efforts by creating a clear, traceable record of transactions that can be used in ongoing investigations.

Furthermore, the bill prohibits the purchase of unattached catalytic converters by scrap metal dealers unless specific documentation is provided, and it increases financial penalties for those who violate these requirements. These safeguards close loopholes that have allowed bad actors to profit off stolen parts with little oversight, while ensuring legitimate businesses can continue operations without excessive burden. By targeting the resale market, we remove the incentive for theft and help law enforcement track down repeat offenders.

HB 210 balances public safety with practical business concerns, providing a framework that stakeholders from both sides—law enforcement and recyclers—have agreed is both necessary and fair. I urge the Committee’s support in moving this legislation forward to protect Ohioans from financial loss, preserve public safety, and hold those responsible for catalytic converter theft accountable. The LSC associated Fiscal Statements concluded that HB 210 has a minimal associated cost, and we know based on experience that it comes with maximum benefits. Thanks again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 210, we welcome any questions after remarks from my Joint-Sponsor, Rep. Plummer.