

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 23

To Enact Section 5502.54 of the Revised Code to Create the Escaped Convict Alert Program

Good morning, Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Public Safety Committee.

My name is Bruce Zuchowski, and I proudly serve as the Sheriff of Portage County. I've lived in Portage County since 1978 and have dedicated 34 years of my life to public service in law enforcement, including 26 years with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, 14 of those as Assistant Post Commander, and additional time as a special deputy here in Portage County.

I appear before you today in strong support of House Bill 23, which seeks to establish the Escaped Convict Alert Program.

With decades of experience in law enforcement and training, I've learned that time is one of our most valuable resources when responding to threats. An escaped felon is a danger not only to one facility or jurisdiction, but to the surrounding communities and citizens at large. This bill provides law enforcement with a vital tool, an alert system designed to quickly inform the public and coordinate multi-agency response efforts across county lines.

In today's world, public safety demands rapid communication and collaboration. House Bill 23 answers that need. Much like existing Amber or Blue Alert systems, this program would empower law enforcement to disseminate urgent, actionable information to both officers and the public, increasing the likelihood of a quick apprehension and reducing the threat to our communities.

Over the course of my career, I've not only served on the front lines, but also trained hundreds of officers, school administrators, and civilians in active shooter and safety response protocols. I know how critical it is to have systems in place that enhance preparedness and communication. The Escaped Convict Alert Program will do just that.

I respectfully urge your support for this legislation. It represents a common-sense, proactive step forward in keeping Ohioans safe.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully, Sheriff Bruce Zuchowski

Portage County Sheriff's Office