



Ohio House of Representatives Public Safety Committee

Jon Harvey, President

Ohio Association of Professional Fire Fighters

Proponent Testimony on House Bill 20

June 3, 2025

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 20. My name is Jon Harvey, and I serve as President for the Ohio Association of Professional Fire Fighters (OAPFF), representing over 13,500 professional firefighters, 300 Locals, covering 97% of Ohio's professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel across the state.

The OAPFF supports Rep. Hall and Rep. Plummer's H.B. 20, which seeks to enhance the safety and effectiveness of emergency service responders by:

Creating the Offense of Harassing an Emergency Service Responder: This provision makes it a first-degree misdemeanor to knowingly harass or impede an emergency service responder engaged in the lawful performance of their duties, particularly when an individual approaches or remains within 14 feet of the responder after receiving a warning.

Modifying the Offense of Menacing: The bill extends heightened penalties for menacing to include probation officers and their immediate contacts, aligning with existing protections for other emergency service responders.

Our members frequently encounter situations where bystanders, either intentionally or unintentionally, interfere with emergency operations. Such interference can delay critical response times, endanger both responders and civilians, and exacerbate already volatile situations.

For instance, in a 2019 incident in Cincinnati, a bystander live-streamed a fire scene and refused to comply with orders to maintain a safe distance. This obstruction delayed rescue operations and compromised the safety of both the victim and the responders. Under H.B. 20, such behavior would be clearly defined as unlawful, providing law enforcement with the necessary tools to address and prevent such interference.

H.B. 20 represents a proactive step toward safeguarding those who dedicate their lives to protecting our communities. By establishing clear boundaries and consequences for obstructive behavior, this legislation ensures that emergency service responders can perform their duties without undue hindrance.

We urge the committee to favorably report H.B. 20 and advance it through the legislative process. Thank you for your attention and commitment to the safety of Ohio's emergency responders.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Harvey, President
Ohio Association of Professional Fire Fighters