



**Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police  
House Bill 20 – Proponent Testimony  
House Public Safety Committee**

**Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Public Safety Committee:**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today on House Bill 20.

My name is Robert Butler, and I am testifying today in my capacity as President of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, representing our members across the state.

We commend Representatives Hall and Plummer for sponsoring this important legislation, which takes a balanced and thoughtful approach to protecting Ohio’s law enforcement officers and emergency responders as they carry out their critical duties. House Bill 20 proposes the establishment of a 14-foot buffer zone — a more measured distance than Florida’s comparable 25-foot law — that demonstrates Ohio’s commitment to both officer safety and the protection of public freedoms.

This buffer zone would continue to allow the public to lawfully record and assemble near officers, while providing a clear and enforceable boundary to prevent harassment, interference, and dangerous distractions during high-stakes encounters.

Since 2020, we’ve seen numerous situations across the country — including right here in Columbus — where first responders attempting to conduct lawful arrests, provide emergency care, or maintain public order were surrounded by hostile or aggressive crowds. Most recently, similar events occurred in California just last week during large-scale protests. These scenarios create unpredictable and volatile environments that threaten the safety of both the public and those sworn to protect them.

While current laws do address direct threats, House Bill 20 would offer an additional, proactive tool for officers to maintain a safe and manageable perimeter during critical incidents. It ensures responders can perform their duties without undue interference, while still respecting constitutional rights.

We believe this legislation strikes an appropriate balance — empowering law enforcement to maintain order in tense or rapidly evolving situations, while providing a fair and reasonable warning to individuals approaching too closely during police activity.

The Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police **strongly supports** House Bill 20 and urges the committee to advance it to the full House for a floor vote.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information about our position on this legislation.