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June 16, 2025

Dear Members of the House Public Safety Committee,

On behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association (OFCA), I write to express our strong support for House Bill 20, legislation that establishes clear penalties for individuals who harass or impede emergency service responders engaged in the lawful performance of their duties.

Every day, Ohio's firefighters, EMS personnel, and other first responders put their lives on the line to protect our communities. Yet, they are increasingly subjected to verbal abuse, threats, and physical interference while on emergency scenes. This behavior not only jeopardizes the safety of our personnel but also delays lifesaving interventions for those in need.

House Bill 20 takes a proactive and necessary step to protect these professionals by:

- Creating a new criminal offense for knowingly harassing an emergency service responder;
- Establishing a clear boundary of fourteen feet following a verbal warning, ensuring responders have the space to work safely;
- Elevating penalties for menacing offenses directed at first responders, probation officers, and others serving the public in critical roles.

These protections reinforce the message that interference with public safety operations will not be tolerated in Ohio. The OFCA applauds Representative Hall and Representative Plummer for introducing this bill and urges swift passage of House Bill 20.

Thank you for your continued support of Ohio's fire and EMS personnel.

Sincerely,

Chief Steve Agenbroad
OFCA Legislative Committee Chair