



Representative Munira Abdullahi

House District 09

Transportation Committee

H.B. 63 Sponsor Testimony
3:30 PM, Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Good Afternoon, Chair Willis, Vice Chair Daniels, Ranking Member Grim, and members of the Ohio Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on H.B. 63, *The Safe Stops Act*, alongside my colleague, Representative McNally. This important legislation seeks to enhance safety at Ohio's rest areas by requiring the installation and maintenance of security camera systems at every rest area under the jurisdiction of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT).

As public servants, we all share a fundamental responsibility: ensuring the safety and well-being of our constituents and everyone traveling through our great state. Ohio's highway rest areas serve millions of travelers each year, including families, truck drivers, and tourists. These stops provide essential rest and relief for those on the road, but unfortunately, they can also become hotspots for criminal activity. Our goal with H.B. 63 is to take proactive measures to secure these areas, protect the public, and reduce crime.

Security cameras play a crucial role in public safety—not only by capturing and providing evidence after an incident occurs but, more importantly, by

serving as a deterrent to crime in the first place. Studies consistently show that surveillance systems reduce criminal activity simply by their presence. The mere sight of a security camera, alarm, or access control system sends a clear message: **“This property is being monitored.”** This psychological deterrent discourages individuals from engaging in unlawful behavior, whether it be theft, vandalism, violence, or human trafficking.

Moreover, in the unfortunate event that a crime does occur, having security footage allows law enforcement to quickly investigate and respond. High-quality surveillance footage can provide critical evidence, helping authorities apprehend perpetrators, secure convictions, and ultimately prevent repeat offenses. This legislation ensures that our law enforcement agencies are equipped with the resources they need to keep Ohioans safe.

Beyond the immediate impact on safety, investing in security infrastructure also carries significant fiscal benefits. Crime imposes substantial costs on society—not just in terms of law enforcement and judicial expenses, but also in lost productivity, property damage, and long-term rehabilitation services. By deterring criminal activity at rest stops, we reduce the need for costly interventions such as incarceration and victim support programs.

In other words, every crime that is prevented translates into savings for Ohio taxpayers. The cost of installing and maintaining security systems is a prudent investment that will yield long-term financial benefits by reducing crime-related expenditures and enhancing public confidence in the safety of our transportation infrastructure.

One of the most pressing concerns regarding rest area safety is the prevalence of human trafficking. Ohio has been ranked as high as 4th in the nation for reported human trafficking cases—a deeply troubling statistic that underscores the urgency of this legislation. Rest areas, by their very nature,

can become locations where traffickers exploit vulnerable individuals, moving them from one location to another under the cover of anonymity.

By equipping these locations with security cameras, we add another layer of defense against this heinous crime. Surveillance footage can assist law enforcement in identifying trafficking networks, tracking suspicious activity, and rescuing victims. Additionally, the presence of cameras makes these locations less attractive to traffickers in the first place, pushing them away from Ohio's highways and making our state a more hostile environment for such exploitation.

H.B. 63 is a commonsense measure that prioritizes the safety of Ohioans, strengthens law enforcement capabilities, and promotes fiscal responsibility. Security cameras are a proven tool for reducing crime, protecting travelers, and deterring illegal activity at rest areas. With millions of motorists using these facilities every year, we must take the necessary steps to ensure they remain safe and secure.

I urge the members of this committee to support *The Safe Stops Act* and help make Ohio's rest areas a safer place for all. Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.