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Sponsor Testimony

Senate Bill 26

Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee

January 29th, 2025

Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 26.

The idea for this legislation was brought to my attention by one of our former colleagues, Senator Hoagland. Law enforcement agencies within Ohio, and even across the entirety of the United States, are facing greater challenges as technology continues to advance.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), RC cars, remote surveillance, underwater drones, etc. are becoming much more accessible and cheaper for the average consumer. These devices pose a critical security threat to high population density areas. Imagine any concert or sporting event taking place in an open air stadium.

The matter of whether someone may exploit these security deficiencies is no longer an if, but a when. Both domestic and foreign adversaries of the United States will stop at nothing to take advantage of the vulnerabilities within our society. This is the greatest danger faced by law enforcement of our time.

Law enforcement agencies must constantly adapt and change to meet these developing threats. Training standards must continually be updated and revised. Our law enforcement already faces so much scrutiny from the departments, however there is currently very little legislative insight into this matter. This legislation seeks to resolve this disparity with the creation of the Joint Law Enforcement Oversight Committee (JLEOC).

JLEOC in many respects would operate the same way as the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee. Its membership would be made up of 3 members from each chamber, 2 from each majority and 1 from each minority, determined by the respective President, Speaker, and Minority Leaders.

An appropriation will also be made from the GRF for the purpose of JLEOC employing an investigative task force. Funding for the task force will only cover one year of their operation. In that time, they will be tasked with the investigation and analysis of Ohio law enforcement agencies, determining the effectiveness, resilience, readiness, and preparedness of each of their training standards in the face of modern challenges.

I want to ensure the training standards of our law enforcement agencies are ready and equipped to face the ever evolving technological landscape. Difficult as this may be, the results of this year-long investigation will be organized into a report by JLEOC, from which actionable legislation may be developed. This is only the first step in a long fact-finding endeavor. It is of utmost importance that we act today in order to preserve the lives of Ohioans.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.