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State Senator Catherine D. Ingram

9th Senate District
136th General Assembly

Sponsor Testimony – Senate Bill 169,

Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and esteemed colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 169, which I have introduced to require emotional intelligence quotient (EIQ) training for Ohio's peace officers.

This bill stems from a clear and growing need in our law enforcement system—not just for more training, but for the right kind of training that strengthens both our public safety outcomes and the mental well-being of those we ask to do this critical work every day.

Emotional intelligence—the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as those of others—is essential in high-stress professions like law enforcement. It encompasses self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and relationship management. These skills enable officers to navigate volatile situations, de-escalate conflicts, and build trust with the communities they serve.

We know that officers routinely encounter trauma. A 2021 study published by the National Library of Medicine found that long-term exposure to traumatic incidents—everything from domestic violence calls to witnessing fatal accidents—can lead to serious mental health consequences, including PTSD, anxiety, and depression. And yet, due to longstanding stigma, many officers fear that seeking support will lead to them being viewed as unfit for duty.

Even more alarming, data from the National Alliance on Mental Illness shows that nearly 1 in 4 law enforcement officers have considered suicide. In fact, more officers die by suicide than are killed in the line of duty each year. This is a crisis we can no longer ignore.

By integrating emotional intelligence training into our peace officer certification process, SB 169 helps address this crisis at its root. Officers trained in emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage high-pressure situations, communicate effectively, regulate their own stress responses,

and avoid burnout. Just as importantly, they are more likely to engage with the public in ways that reduce conflict and foster cooperation.

Ohio is already making strides toward improving mental health services for first responders. Programs like the Ohio First Responder Wellness Program, supported by the Ohio Department of Public Safety, provide important resources including peer support, critical incident stress management, and trauma-informed care. SB 169 builds on these efforts by embedding emotional wellness into the foundation of an officer's training—not just as an add-on, but as a professional standard.

This bill is about giving officers the tools they need to do their jobs well—and to stay well while doing them. It's about preventing tragedy, both in our communities and within our departments. And it's about making Ohio a leader in smart, compassionate, and resilient public safety practices.

I respectfully ask for your support of Senate Bill 169 and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.