



Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
House Bill 44 – Proponent Testimony
Senate Armed Services, Veteran’s Affairs and Public Safety Committee

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Armed Services, Veteran’s Affairs and Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony today on HB 44.

My name is Robert Butler and I am representing the membership of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police today as President of the organization. I am also the Chief of Police of the Independence Police Department.

The Chiefs Association applauds the efforts of Representatives Joseph Miller and Kevin Miller for sponsoring this bill in an effort to provide a more level playing field for statutory cities in Ohio to hire qualified police officers through lateral transfers. As you know, in Ohio charter cities have the ability to conduct lateral hiring for police officers without having to go through the civil service process of posting and testing that is required of statutory cities. HB 44 would grant police departments in statutory cities the same opportunity to fill vacant positions in civil service without an exam if the department can present evidence that the competitive component of exams is deemed unnecessary, and the applicant has exceptional qualifications. This will greatly expedite the ability of these cities to hire qualified police officers who can more quickly provide an impact and benefit to the city.

Currently, law enforcement recruitment in the US and in Ohio specifically has become increasingly difficult, resulting in many vacancies in agencies large and small. Just this past summer, the International Association of Chiefs of Police conducted a nationwide survey of police executives on this very issue. The results of the survey indicate that police agencies nationwide are operating on average, at a nearly 10% deficit. In addition, about 65% of respondents to the survey indicated that they have had to “reduce services or specialized units because of staffing challenges.”¹ Anecdotally, we hear of many agencies who used to attract hundreds of applicants for open positions who are now attracting a fraction of the previous numbers. This trend is exacerbated by the fact that law enforcement has seen a dramatic rise in resignations by sworn officers since 2019. According to an annual Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) study conducted last year, resignations by sworn officers since 2019 have risen by over 80% for small agencies, by around 21% for medium-sized agencies, and about 24% for large agencies.²

An additional benefit of this bill is the creation of a hiring stream of homegrown officer candidates who would be allowed to go through local department sponsored training programs and then hired directly if they become OPOTA certified as police officers, as described under ORC Section 109.77. This section of the bill provides a huge benefit to agencies who are inclined to take on this responsibility by allowing them to invest in police cadet program for future officers and then hire them directly once they meet the requirements already in place with OPOTA.

Unfortunately, there are real impacts as a result of the current crisis in hiring and recruiting police officers. With reduced staffing, there are fewer police on the streets helping to prevent and reduce crime. Fewer police officers available to respond to emergencies, fewer officers available to prevent dangerous driving and traffic crashes, and fewer officers available to investigate the violent crimes occurring in our cities, counties and small towns.

Passing this bill allows a more streamlined hiring process for statutory cities, when qualified candidates are available, that will go a long way towards putting qualified police officers to work quickly and with less initial expense. We strongly urge the committee to vote favorably on HB 44 and send it to the House floor for a vote.

In addition, the Chiefs Association fully supports the sections of this bill that would allow new police chief training to be provided at locations chosen by the Ohio Peace Officers Training Council, rather than only in London at the OPOTA Academy, as well as the language that alters current law by specifying that a “newly appointed” chief is one who has never held the full-time position of chief of police before appointment.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share testimony on behalf of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience if you have any questions about our position on this bill.

¹IACP. (2024). *The State of Recruitment and Retention: A Continuing Crisis for Policing*. International Association of Chiefs of Police. <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/2024Recruitment%26RetentionSurveyResults.pdf>

²Karch, T. (March 7, 2024). *Playing the Long Game: Law Enforcement Recruitment*. The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin. <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/playing-the-long-game-law-enforcement-recruitment#:~:text=By%20Timothy%20Karch%2C%20M.S.,traditional%20in%20person%20office%20jobs.>