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Ohio Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Public Safety Committee

House Bill 44

Proponent Testimony

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, and Ranking Member Weinstein, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 44. The underlying bill of allowing for cadet programs to be established in non-chartered municipalities will certainly aid in fortifying law enforcement's recruiting pipeline while also leveling the playing field amongst all of Ohio's local governments. For the purposes of my testimony, I'd like to focus on language which was added to the bill prior to being voted out of committee which centered around our police chief's training. The language before you is the product of lengthy collaboration between the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission and Academy (OPOTA).

The impetus behind the language present in House Bill 44 is to provide greater flexibility to Ohio's newly-appointed chiefs of police. The legislation accomplishes this in a number of ways, including allowing the required training for new chiefs to take place at locations other than OPOTA's headquarters in London, Ohio as it is currently required in existing law. Under the bill, the commission will reserve the authority to determine which locations that the training may occur, as well as to prescribe the nature of the training. The content of the 40-hour required training will remain focused on the needs of new chiefs and is updated frequently to ensure that current trends are addressed.

House Bill 44 will also now allow a newly-appointed chief to request an equivalency exemption from eight of the training hours if they have graduated from a major law enforcement training program. While the bill does not specify which programs qualify an officer for exemption, OPOTA intends to exempt those who have a master's degree in law enforcement, and will recognize training from institutions, including, but not limited to the following: the FBI National Academy; Certified Law Enforcement Executive (CLEE); Southern Police Institute; Northwestern's School of Police Staff and Command; and the OSU John Glenn Public Safety Leadership Academy.

The language present in House Bill 44 further eases the burden on new chiefs with prior experience by specifying that the training requirements apply only to individuals who have never held the full-time position of chief of police in the past. This provision will address potential redundancies in training caused by ambiguity in existing law.

Finally, the legislation also addresses direct feedback from law enforcement regarding the need for training for officers operating in supervisory roles such as Sergeant and Lieutenant. These individuals serve in leadership roles, support the department Chief and offer guidance to fellow officers. The state can support law enforcement by responding to the request for formal instruction for those occupying roles at the rank of Sergeant, and above.

We appreciate Representative Joe Miller and Representative Kevin Miller for their leadership on this issue. Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Ohio Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Public Safety Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony. I would be happy to take any questions at this time.