



Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
Interested Party Testimony – House Bill 96
Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee
Chief Heinz von Eckartsberg (ret.)

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 96, the state's operating budget. On behalf of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP), we commend the collaborative efforts of Governor DeWine, Attorney General Yost, and the Ohio Legislature in shaping the FY26-27 operating budget. We sincerely appreciate your continued commitment to ensuring that Ohio's law enforcement agencies have the tools and resources needed to protect and serve our communities.

We are especially grateful for the General Assembly's steadfast support of Continuing Professional Training (CPT). In previous budget cycles, the legislature allocated \$80 million for CPT through ALI 055509—a critical investment that has enabled law enforcement officers across Ohio to receive training aligned with evolving laws, legal standards, and best practices. These trainings address essential areas such as use of force, mental health crisis response, officer wellness, and more.

However, we are concerned that the House-passed version of the budget reduces CPT funding to \$65 million for the biennium. We respectfully urge the Senate to restore full funding at the previous \$80 million level. Without this support, many departments—especially smaller and rural agencies—may struggle to provide the comprehensive training necessary for officers to serve their communities effectively and safely.

In addition, our members have expressed concerns regarding a provision in the current version of the budget that would change the county coroner position from an elected office to one appointed by county commissioners. We believe that granting appointment authority to county commissioners introduces a risk of political influence in determining causes and manners of death—an essential and impartial function of the coroner. To preserve the integrity and independence of this office, we respectfully request the removal of this provision, ensuring that county coroners remain directly accountable to the citizens they serve.

Lastly, we respectfully ask the legislature to incorporate language in House Bill 96 to increase employer contributions to the Ohio Police and Fire Pension System from 19.5% to 24%, aligning with current employer contributions for firefighters. As you know, this issue was previously addressed in House Bill 296, which passed the House in the last General Assembly. Since 2012, OP&F pension members have endured over \$3.2 billion in benefit cuts to stabilize the fund, including:

- Raising the minimum retirement age from 48 to 52,
- Capping cost-of-living adjustments at 3%, with elimination of COLAs for those under 55,
- Replacing comprehensive health care coverage with a stipend-based model,
- Increasing member contributions from 10% to 12.25%.

Employer contributions, however, have remained unchanged for nearly 40 years. Adjusting them now is a necessary step toward long-term pension sustainability.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these recommendations and are grateful for your continued leadership in advancing public safety across Ohio. Your support remains vital to ensuring our officers are well-trained, well-equipped, and well-prepared to meet the challenges of modern policing.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions.