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Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 20

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 20.

This bill is an opportunity for us to once again provide protections for those that day in and day out put their lives on the line to keep each and every one of us safe. Our first responders’ – police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and others – ability to safely and efficiently carry out their duties is essential to the functioning of our society.

Speaking from my own experience, whether it be responding to a crash with entrapment, or an unresponsive victim, firefighters and EMS personnel need to be able to assess the situation, provide the appropriate care, and make decisions in moment’s notice. Any factor, or in this case person, that disrupts that process can ultimately be the difference between someone living or dying.

In this legislation, we are not saying people cannot be helpful, and we are not saying people cannot record the event that is going on. This legislation is simply providing first the responders the ability and opportunity to do their jobs more effectively and remain focused on the incident at hand. The Halo proposal is just a way to ensure they have the necessary amount of space to get their jobs done.

Colleagues, this is common sense legislation to allow our first responders the space to do their jobs. In some cases, life and death are gambling with each other and we cannot afford a first responder to be distracted by an agitator.

As a former Sheriff, I understand the high stress situations our first responders can come across, and to alleviate any of those stressors allows for first responders to better address any given situation. This bill simply allows first responders to focus on their duties and protect our community. With ever-growing staffing issues for our police departments, this bill helps first responders be more efficient in their responses, prohibiting agitators from repeatedly hindering the mission in front of us.

Once again, Chair Manning and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 20. We would be happy to answer any questions at this time.