OHIO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
Partnering for Stronger Cities and Villages

OHIO SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
March 25, 2026

Written Proponent Testimony
House Bill 20

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Kent Scarrett, and I serve as Executive Director of the Ohio Municipal League, which represents more than 730 cities and villages across the state. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony regarding our support for House Bill 20, which increases the penalty for obstructing official business related to emergency responders.

Ohio's municipalities are on the front lines of public safety. Police officers, firefighters, and EMS personnel serve as the backbone of safe and thriving communities. Local governments are responsible for funding, staffing, and supporting these services – often at significant cost. In many municipalities, public safety expenditures account for between 70% and 85% of total general fund budgets, underscoring both the importance of these services and the level of local support required to sustain them.

House Bill 20 is a practical and targeted effort to protect that investment and, more importantly, the people who deliver these essential services.

Municipal officials regularly hear from police chiefs, fire chiefs, and frontline responders about the growing challenges they face while carrying out their duties – particularly in high-stress, rapidly evolving situations.

The provisions in House Bill 20 provide an important and reasonable tool for maintaining order at emergency scenes. This approach balances the public's right to observe and record with the need for responders to operate safely and effectively.

For cities and villages, where local officials are directly accountable for public safety outcomes and responsible for stewarding taxpayer resources, this legislation represents a commonsense step forward.

On behalf of Ohio's municipalities, we appreciate the work of Rep. Hall and Rep. Plummer on this issue and respectfully urge the committee to favorably report House Bill 20. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this legislation.