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**House Bill 20**
**Chief Joe Kitchen – Proponent Testimony**
**March 25, 2026**

Good morning, Chairman Manning, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee. My name is Joseph Kitchen. I serve as Fire Chief of the Bath Township Fire Department in Allen County, and I am the current President of the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 20.
At its core, House Bill 20 is about ensuring that first responders can do their jobs without interference when seconds matter most.

Across Ohio, firefighters, paramedics, and law enforcement officers are increasingly encountering situations where individuals interfere with emergency scenes—whether by getting too close, disrupting operations, or creating unnecessary distractions.

These actions may seem minor, but in an emergency, they can:

- Delay life-saving care
- Increase risk to responders
- Compromise scene safety for everyone involved

This bill addresses that problem in a measured and reasonable way. It focuses specifically on knowing and intentional interference, while still respecting the public's right to observe.

From a fire service perspective, this is critical.

Our personnel are trained to operate in high-risk, high-stress environments. They are making split-second decisions that directly impact lives. They should not have to divide their attention between patient care and managing preventable disruptions.

House Bill 20 provides clarity and reinforces that emergency scenes must remain controlled, professional environments focused on saving lives.

This legislation is not about limiting rights—it is about protecting public safety and ensuring effective emergency response.
On behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association and the members we represent across this state, I respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 20.

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

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