

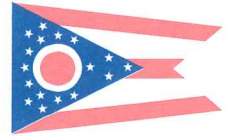


FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE OF OHIO, INC.

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February 23, 2016

Chairman Johnson and the members of the House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs & Public Safety:

My name is Jim Fitsko and I am here to give opposition testimony to HB 104 on behalf of the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio (FOP).

I am an active police officer with 24 years of service with the City of Marion, and a member of the legislative committee for the Ohio FOP. The FOP proudly represents over 25,000 law enforcement professionals that risk their lives on a daily basis protecting members of our communities. The FOP of Ohio represents municipal law enforcement officers, county deputies, township officers and officers from most state law enforcement agencies.

Changing the display of the front license plate from a primary offense to a secondary offense is a mistake that endangers our communities. The FOP has been opposed to the elimination of the front license plate for at least a decade and our reasons for doing so remain valid today.

Traffic stops for failure to display a front license plate have led to the discovery of serious offenses and the capture of numerous criminals. While the reason for the stop may have been for the failure to display a front license plate, the end result may be the arrest of a serious criminal offender. Failure to display front license plate traffic stops have caused the arrests of:

OVI drivers who represent a clear and present danger in all of communities.

Wanted suspects are identified by officers and civilians who are driving towards, and pass, the suspect vehicle. If not for the front license plate, there may be no way to identify the suspect vehicle in that situation

Suspects involved in retail theft often have their front license plate captured by video surveillance or by the clerks themselves.

Hit-skip drivers- often times the reporter may only get a chance to see the front license plate.

Gas drive offs- again often times the reporter may only see the front license plate.

Murders - I was personally involved in a traffic stop years ago where the vehicle was stopped for no front license plate. That stop led to the discovery of a murder victim being transported in the storage compartment of the SUV. Because of that stop, a murderer was sentenced to a long prison sentence, and a family got the satisfaction of their son's killer being captured and brought to justice. This arrest only happened because the law enforcement officer had the right to make a traffic stop for failure to display a front license plate.

This is only a very short list to give you a general idea of some of the crimes that will go unpunished by removing the ability for law enforcement officers to stop vehicles that fail to

display a front license plate. Frankly, many crimes could potentially be solved through the use of a front license plate.

In addition to making failure to display a front license plate a secondary offense, the bill sets a maximum fine of \$25.00 (twenty five dollars). The FOP chooses not to take a stance on the fine amount in this bill as it does not affect how officers conduct their business as much as the section that makes it a secondary offense. This change would preclude officers from making traffic stops for failure to display a front license plate without some other violation.

Again, the FOP is opposed to HB 104. The display of the front license plate is an extremely important tool used by the public when reporting crimes and by law enforcement when investigating crimes. The crimes that have been solved and/or prevented because the State of Ohio requires the use of a front license plate far outweighs any reason to abolish its use or the enforcement of the requirement.

On behalf of the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will be happy to address any questions that you may have at this time.