



Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association

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Senate Bill 359
Written Proponent Testimony
December 2, 2020

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 359 a bill that appropriately responds to some of the dangers that emergency service responders face in Ohio in the name of keeping Ohioans safe. As Sen. Schaffer noted in his sponsor testimony, Ohioans have seen, read about, and even personally experienced some of these dangers during the unrest and rioting that took place earlier this year. First responders have been followed home, have seen their property targeted and damaged, have seen families scared, and have been personally threatened.

Senate Bill 359 responds to these acts and others in a variety of ways that will give prosecutors additional tools to secure justice for emergency service responders and their family members and hopefully deter these acts from happening again. The bill does this by increasing the penalties for offenses like felonious assault, assault, menacing, inciting to violence, and intimidation when those offense involve emergency service responders or their families. The bill creates the new offenses like unlawfully impeding public passage, harassment in a place of public accommodation, and harassing an emergency service responder or family. It also expands the definition of “corrupt activity” to encompass certain acts taken in support of riots and aggravated riots.

While our organization typically opposes legislation that increases penalties for special classes of victims, we have in the past and continue to make exceptions for the most vulnerable, like children and the elderly, and for those who put their lives on the line in the name of public safety. Senate Bill 359 falls squarely within this latter category and, again, provides prosecutors with some additional measures that should help keep our communities and our emergency service responders safe.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on this bill, thank Sen. Schaffer for his work and advocacy on behalf of law enforcement and other emergency service personnel, and encourage the committee’s favorable consideration of this bill.