



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE, INC.

Chief Bruce Pijanowski
Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
Testimony in Support of SB 16

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. My name is Bruce Pijanowski, the Chief of Police for the City of Delaware representing the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony in support of Senate Bill 16.

OACP is firmly in support of this bill for the support that it provides to emergency first responders. We support legislation that protects emergency service responders from crimes committed against them and affords protection to include crimes committed against families and our lives as private citizens. While the need for professional policing is a conversation that we are embracing as an organization, it is also imperative that protections exist for our first responders as they continue to handle high risk calls and events in the environment that now exists.

This legislation will provide protection, preferably as a deterrent, against those that seek to threaten, assault, or obstruct law enforcement officers. OACP is very clear on protecting 1st amendment rights, but in this legislation, we see a clear distinction in that it addresses obstructive activity that impacts public safety, and not protected free speech. It is important to recognize that these actions that are occurring not only adversely affect our first responders personally, but the distractions that they cause also adversely affect the innocent public that we are trying to protect.

OACP also supports the provisions in this legislation that would allow law enforcement officers who suffer and injury, death, or loss as a result of an obstructive act or a false complaint to initiate a civil action. It is the sad fact that currently in many of these cases we must ignore it and move on. It should not be an acceptable part of the job. Just as we embrace the conversations about improving the profession; so, to do we embrace an environment where our first line responders are protected both criminally and civilly during the course of their duties. The impact on our retention of officers, the ability to recruit officers, and the ability to encourage officers to be engaged in our communities demands it.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB16 and would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the importance of this legislation.