

MEDINA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



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TERRY GRICE, SHERIFF

February 25, 2021
House Finance Committee
House Bill 74- Proponent Testimony

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, my name is Terry Grice, I am the Medina County Sheriff. I appreciate your willingness to allow me the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 74. I am entering my 22nd year in law enforcement and during my tenure I have seen many advances in technology. Many of these advances have provided great benefits; however, the advancement of smartphones has provided new dangers, especially while driving.

We are in an age where multitasking is thought to be the norm, even while driving a motor vehicle. Society has become so driven by the need to have immediate response; drivers are taking unnecessary risks. The number of motor vehicle crashes continue to increase, which is directly correlated to distracted driving. From 2013-2019 the number of crashes related to distractive driving was over 91,000, per a study performed by Ohio Department of Transportation. These crashes resulted in more than 47,000 injuries and a loss of 305 lives. Many of the injured and killed were innocent victims. This fact cannot be overstated, innocent people within this great State have lost their life as a result of the idea that using a mobile device while driving is safe. It is not.

Ohio is one of only four states without primary enforcement of distracted driving laws. As I am sure you are aware, the "Hands-Free Ohio" language included in Governor DeWine's transportation budget proposal would make driving while handling any electronic wireless device a primary offense. It would prohibit drivers from texting, emailing, watching or recording video, surfing the internet, and/or engaging in other activities that require physically holding a phone or wireless device. At the same time, it would still allow drivers to use voice commands or single-touch activation to make calls, text, use GPS or listen to music on mobile devices---and would allow exceptions for emergency calls.

By making distracted driving a primary offense, we are allowing our deputies/officers/troopers to perform their job to the best of their ability. It would allow these dedicated individuals to truly go out on a daily basis and make a positive impact on the lives of others by ensuring our roadways are safe. It would level the playing field by allowing all drivers to feel secure that a mobile device is not a distraction while driving, for themselves and fellow drivers. The passing of this bill reiterates to drivers and passenger of motor vehicles that Ohio takes safety seriously. If the law were to remain a secondary violation, law enforcement can only react to a violation after they see a potentially dangerous infraction, being reactive versus proactive. Law enforcement needs to be a proactive vocation. A profession which aims to prevent injury and death. With the passage of House Bill 74, that is exactly what our deputies will do.

Thank you for your time and I appreciate your consideration.

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