



OHIO PATROLMEN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

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October 26, 2021

Representative Shane Wilkin
Chairman House Government Oversight Committee
77 S. High St.
12th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (OPBA) is firmly opposed to certain provisions of Substitute House Bill 227. My name is Tom Austin, Executive Director for the OPBA. Thank you for allowing me to provide this written opposition to Sub. HB 227. I am Executive Director of the OPBA and an active police sergeant. The OPBA represents nearly 8,000 active and retired members, including police officers and sheriffs' deputies across the state. This bill makes several changes to existing state law that will impact the day-to-day lives of our members. The bill will make our members less safe while doing their jobs.

The OPBA is not here to express an opinion on the Second Amendment or the right to carry concealed weapons; however, we have concerns with certain provisions in the substitute bill, primarily the repeal of the notice requirement applicable to licensees stopped for law enforcement purposes. The current restrictions are reasonable. This discussion is not anti-gun, but about what is reasonable. The current concealed carry law is not onerous and should remain as currently enacted.

The bill eliminates the requirement that a concealed handgun licensee (under the bill a "concealed weapons licensee") and does not provide that any individual must promptly notify a law enforcement officer when stopped that the person is a licensee and is then carrying a concealed handgun. The requirement to notify a law enforcement officer that an individual is carrying a concealed weapon is paramount to ensuring interactions with law enforcement are safe. We cannot interpret intentions in fast moving, volatile, and confusing scenes where split second decisions are required. This was made clear on July 13, 2008 around 2 a.m. when one of my fellow officers initiated a traffic stop on a person with a valid concealed carry license. Within minutes of initiating the stop, the suspect shot my fellow officer in the head multiple times, killing him. It is believed my fellow officer never received the information from dispatch about the suspect having a concealed carry license.

While it is hopeful that most people carrying a concealed weapon will tell an officer they have one, there is no guarantee they will. As a responsible gun owner, the onus should always be on that person to advise law enforcement that they are carrying. Those in legal possession of firearms should have no reason to fear notifying the police.

In closing, we believe it is reasonable to ask those carrying concealed weapons to be required to tell law enforcement that they are carrying when in contact with the police. The OPBA urges you to reinstate the notice requirements into the substitute bill and leave the existing common-sense safeguards in place.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Austin
OPBA Executive Director