



Department of Public Safety

Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Thomas J. Stickrath, Director
Colonel Richard S. Fambro, Superintendent



Ohio State Highway Patrol Testimony of Colonel Richard Fambro Transportation Budget Bill House Finance Transportation Subcommittee February 9, 2021

Chairman Patton, Ranking Member Skindell, and Members of the House Finance Transportation Subcommittee: I am Colonel Richard Fambro, superintendent of the Ohio State Highway Patrol. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to testify on the budget for the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

It was a pleasure testifying this morning during the House Finance Committee. In the interest of time, and with your permission, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to provide members of the Subcommittee an abridged version of my earlier testimony.

As I said earlier today, 2020 challenged the Patrol to extend its operations outside our core mission to fill the needs of communities around the state. While the year brought significant change it also brought opportunity to transform the landscape of our role in communities. Troopers redefined service while maintaining safety on our roadways by removing violations that were a threat to the public.

Never before in the history of the Highway Patrol, had we faced such enormous opposing obstacles simultaneously and on multiple fronts. As part of our COVID-19 pandemic response, the Ohio State Highway Patrol modified our primary focus to provide essential assistance to local communities, while also meeting the needs of our public safety partners.

Patrol personnel participated in food distributions and partnered with schools, community groups and other government agencies. We provided additional security to Ohio prisons, mask relays to Battelle to ensure clean masks were available to first responders, and critical medicine relays to include Remdesivir from the Ohio Department of Health to areas across the state. In total, our Division participated in 442 details and security missions related to the pandemic.

There is no doubt our operations have changed considerably from those of years past, not only due to COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines, but also due to the necessity of protecting our citizens and capitol during civil unrest. However, something which remains consistent is our fervent commitment to the citizens of Ohio.

As demonstrations intensified and became civil disturbances requiring law enforcement intervention, the Ohio State Highway Patrol was there to ensure the safety of those who gathered to be heard in a peaceful manner and protect the property. We made it clear we would not tolerate violence, vandalism and other criminal acts within our jurisdiction.

In fact, the Patrol was engaged in support or collaboration of 795 demonstrations in more than 178 cities in Ohio this past year – and 250 of those demonstrations saw state troopers responding in person to work side-by-side with local law enforcement.

We continued in our role as the state's safety net, and provided free services and resources to communities that made local impacts on safety and security. Some of these no cost services include Special Response Team (SRT), Aviation,

Mobile Field Force and training courses. It's important to note that throughout the year, the quality of service we delivered was not interrupted. The Patrol continued to serve the public by rendering assistance, answering calls for service, providing emergency and lifesaving actions if needed, and remaining visible in an effort to provide safety and instill calm.

In 2019, the Patrol established a Diversity Office and implemented a statewide Diversity and Inclusion Training Course. The Diversity Office also created a Diversity Core Planning group that meets regularly to discuss diversity within our agency and secure the following goals: provide oversight of professional operations; obtain more protected class in each Training Academy class and increase a diversified pool of eligible employees for supervisor positions.

In our recruitment efforts we pivoted from traditional avenues to ensure we are reflective of the communities we serve and in which troopers live. Our approach focused on community and faith based groups; NAACP, Urban League, minority festivals to include Asian festivals, women's events, YMCA's and YWCA's and historically black colleges to name a few.

All of these efforts are focused to improve our diverse workforce and emphasize the importance of equal and intrinsic value. In 2020, the Patrol also launched a Women's Mentorship Program. The Program is based on enriching successful careers, fostering skills and abilities for future leaders, facilitating personal development and continuing to build an inclusive organizational culture.

I want to take a moment to speak directly about the work we do for you to make your workplace – the Statehouse – safe.

Subject to the availability of funds specifically appropriated by the general assembly for security detail purposes, the Ohio State Highway Patrol provides security for the Governor, other state government officials at the direction of the Governor, Capitol Square, the Vern Riffe Center, James A. Rhodes state office tower and other state properties.

In an ongoing basis, we are reassessing security for this building. In light of the current climate, present and additional security measures are being examined to meet the needs of today.

Amidst the organizational shift we made due to the pandemic and response to demonstrations and protests, we never lost sight of our mission critical services. We continued to remove the criminal element from our roadways and focus on traffic safety efforts with the intent to keep crime out of our communities and the roads safe for those who live or travel in Ohio.

Enforcement and education related to four specific threats of drunk drivers, illegal drugs, distracted driving and highway crime are some things we do best. State troopers are out there every day and night, in all 88 counties, focused on preventing traffic crashes and keeping families safe. The Patrol, since inception in 1933, has been fully committed to ensuring Ohio remains among the safest places in America to drive, work and live.

Distracted driving continues to be a danger to everyone using the road, not just the person sending or receiving the text. More than 100,000 distracted driving crashes occurred in Ohio from 2013 to today resulting in over 53,000 injuries and 341 persons killed. In 2020, troopers issued more than 9,400 citations for distracted driving violations and remains a focus for the Patrol. This budget bill includes a provision to provide law enforcement an additional tool to fight distracted driving by making it a primary offense.

Our core mission revolves around those types of critical safety and security areas where every day, across Ohio, state troopers and professional staff directly and positively impact and local communities.

We appreciate the support you have shown to law enforcement and to the Ohio State Highway Patrol during these unique times. As I said this morning, your support to police officers, sheriff deputies and state troopers matters and is appreciated by those on the front lines.

As I conclude my testimony today, at every opportunity, the women and men of the Ohio State Highway Patrol have produced extraordinary accomplishments during unprecedented times. Our collective work serves as a blueprint and foundation for the future.

As you undertake the important work of considering our budget, I know we have an even greater opportunity to contribute to a safer Ohio in the next biennium.

Chairman Patton, Ranking Member Skindell, and Members of the House Finance Transportation Subcommittee, I again thank you for today's opportunity to testify on behalf of the Ohio State Highway Patrol. Again, I am happy to answer questions.