



79TH HOUSE DISTRICT

PARTS OF CLARK COUNTY

**INCLUDING: SPRINGFIELD, NEW CARLISLE,
SOUTH CHARLESTON, AND ENON**

COMMITTEES

**CHAIR: AGRICULTURE & CONSERVATION
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

COLUMBUS OFFICE

**VERN RIFFE CENTER
77 SOUTH HIGH STREET 13TH FLOOR
COLUMBUS, OH 43215-0253
PHONE: (614) 466-2038
REP79@OHIOHOUSE.GOV**

State Representative Kyle Koehler Ohio House of Representatives

Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chairman McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 720.

In many ways, it was my hope to never come before your committee with a bill like this. In other ways, it is a very humbling experience to share with you the life and memory of a hero, Deputy Matthew Yates, and request that a portion of National Road in Clark County be designated in his honor.

On Sunday morning, July 24th of this year, while the rest of our county was waking up like any other Sunday – Deputy Matthew Yates, a fifteen year veteran of the Clark County Sheriff Department and member of the Special Operations Team, responded to a 911 call about a break-in and possible shots-fired on the eastern portion of Clark County. Deputy Matthew Yates was met with gunfire as he entered the home where an assailant had already taken the life of his mother. It took a number of hours for a SWAT Team to end the standoff before Matt could be rescued. By then and by all accounts – it was too late.

On July 24th 2022, Clark County and Ohio lost one of its best.

Deputy Matthew Yates left behind his wife Tracy, his daughter A'kaylehanna, and stepsons Anthony and Andrew. Along with loving siblings and extended family.

Beyond his selfless act on July 24th, Matthew Yates was above all, a loving husband, father, and son.

To say Matthew Yates was well known in the community would be an understatement. The outpouring of love and compassion for his family and the citizens he served was overwhelming even to those dearest to him. While many considered Deputy Yates a dear friend, colleague, and beloved family member, it was not until everyone gathered to honor our fallen hero that we realized that for each person who knew him... there were hundreds and hundreds more who regarded him just as highly.

Mr. Chairman, I would find it very hard to compile the number of words that were spoken by those that knew Matthew Yates since that dreadful day on July 24th. I met Matthew Yates one week before his death as he stood at the entrance of a forum held by the NAACP on gun violence. It is humbling to say, today, that I had the honor of shaking his hand.

When talking to other deputies, the one comment I heard repeatedly that, as a Special Operations Team member, it was Deputy Yates who always wanted, even demanded, that he be the first one in. That was who Deputy Yates was. That bravery is how he will be remembered by those he served with.



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He was well known in our community. His involvement as a Clark County Deputy stemmed from seeing others in our community and in the black community he grew up in... lost to violence. In the end, he followed in the footsteps of his father, Eugene Yates, who was a veteran of the Clark County Sheriff's office. He appeared in news stories back in 2019, when he heard of two boys who were "practicing" to become police officers by "patrolling" an apartment complex near Springfield High School. The boys would wear customized police gear that included hats, badges, walkie-talkies, handcuffs and even notepads for \$2 citations. They were surprised when Deputy Yates went out of his way to stop and talk to the boys, encouraging them after hearing about them at a family gathering.

When talking to his wife Tracy about the response from our community – even she did not realize the magnitude of the effect he had on those he served.

As Special Operations Team Commander – Major Chris Clark told mourners, "Deputy Matthew Yates leaves behind a legacy that each and every one of us will be proud to achieve".

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to take questions but I would rather refer those to Deputy John Loney who served alongside Deputy Yates for most of his career. He is here to testify on House Bill 720 today.