



**State Representative
Michael O'Brien**

Sponsor Testimony HB 206

Thank you Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig and esteemed members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 206.

This legislation enhances the safety of those using our interstate highways, as well as our first responders.

Currently, townships with populations of less than 50,000 have no jurisdiction to make arrests or issue traffic tickets on the interstate highway. This bill would allow township police officers, with populations greater than 5,000 but less than 50,000, if authorized by their trustees, to make arrests for traffic violations occurring on interstate highways within their territorial jurisdiction.

A prime example of why this bill is necessary can be found in the ODOT distracted drivers corridor, which is found on a seventeen-mile stretch of highway in Trumbull and Mahoning Counties. This stretch of roadway is contained within numerous townships with populations that are between 5,000 and 50,000. In this part of the state, county sheriffs are not active in traffic enforcement, especially on the interstates. Enforcement is left nearly exclusively to the Ohio State Highway Patrol. The Patrol does an excellent job, but under some circumstances, their availability is limited.

This bill would allow the township police departments bordering the interstate to respond to emergencies and enforce Ohio's laws within their jurisdiction. It would provide an opportunity for township officers to accompany their fire departments, which are required to respond to accidents and other emergencies on the interstate. Furthermore, it would allow township police departments to work with the highway patrol to devise strategies to prevent and reduce the number of accidents on dangerous roadways.

Allowing these departments jurisdiction will enhance safety to the public and our first responders. It will also open doors for cooperation, which have previously been shut.

Thank you again for affording Representative Ghanbari and I the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 206.