



MONTVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Matthew A. Neil, Chief of Police

March 16th, 2022

The Honorable Kristina Roegner Chair
Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Ohio Senate – 134 General Assembly
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, Ohio 44315

Re: HB 206 Township Police Enforce Certain Laws on the Interstate

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee:

First allow me to thank you for affording me the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 206. My name is Matthew Neil, and I am the Chief of Police and Director of Public Safety for Montville Township, in Medina County. I have been involved in Law Enforcement for the past 28 years, and I have served the last 23 years as a police officer in two different Township Police Departments, in Medina County.

As you know under current law, Township Police Departments, whose population is under 50,000, have no jurisdiction on the Interstate Highway Systems that run through their geographical boundaries.

Both Township Police Departments that I have worked for have over 5 miles, each, of I-71 running through each Township's geographical boundary. These 10 total miles of I-71 encompass several exits including the heavily traveled, commercial area of I-71 and State Route 18.

Over the past 23 years, I have responded to hundreds of crashes on I-71 ranging from Non-Injury to Fatal Injuries. I have been dispatched to hundreds of other calls for service, from disabled vehicles, to drunk drivers, to individuals throwing rocks from overpasses. I have personally successfully assisted in stopping several vehicle pursuits, and I have been publicly recognized for helping save the life of a woman that was thrown from a vehicle during a Domestic Dispute, while traveling on the Interstate.

On a routine basis, my department is dispatched to patrol I-71 to look for vehicles and individuals that are wanted for crimes that occurred in other jurisdictions. These crimes range from theft from a nearby Outlet Mall, to helping stop and apprehend the fleeing suspect that killed Ohio State Patrol Trooper James R. Gross, on January 19th, 1996.

Besides the thousands of calls that my department has handled on I-71, I would like to focus on the portion of the current Revised Code Section 4513.39(B)(1) which restricts Township Police Department's jurisdiction in traffic infractions on Interstates, when that Township does not have a population of more than 50,000.



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Currently, there are only 6 Townships in the state whose population meet this 50,000 threshold. In fact, there are only 14 cities in the entire state that meet this threshold; and Revised Code section 4513.39(A), gives every city and village complete jurisdiction on Interstates running through their municipality, no matter their population. When it comes to our 88 counties, I found that 37 of them don't even meet this 50,000-population threshold, and their Interstate jurisdiction is unlimited.

When it comes to interagency collaboration, the law as currently written reduces the ability for us to partner with the Ohio State Patrol or the Medina County Sheriff's Office. It is very common for the Ohio State Highway Patrol, who is currently understaffed in Medina County, to partner with township agencies to perform saturation patrols in designated areas; these functions are no longer able to be carried out, because of our lack of jurisdiction.

When it comes to training, Township Police Officers are trained the same, and held to the same Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission standards as any other law enforcement officer in the state.

I truly believe that this bill evens out the necessary Interstate jurisdiction issues of Township Police Departments. This bill is about having arrest authority on roadway that is already within our geographical boundaries, and the proposed population threshold of 5,000 is much more reasonable.

By supporting this bill, you are supporting law enforcement, and giving us the tools necessary to enforce, apprehend and combat our ever-growing OVI and Drug issues that take lives of Ohioans every day. By supporting this bill, you are unleashing the current restrictions that prevent us from saving lives and doing our job.

H.B. 206 is about safety and enforcement, not about ticket revenue and not about taking away jurisdiction from others. Law enforcement is in a position today where it is imperative that we work together to achieve great results. This bill allows for future collaborative efforts.

Thank you for your time today. If you have any questions, I would be happy to respond to them. I hope you will support this important public safety bill.

Respectfully,

Matthew A. Neil
Police Chief/Safety Director