



Tim Schaffer  
20th District

**Ohio Senate**  
Senate Building  
Room 128, First Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
(614) 466-8076  
sd20@ohiosenate.gov

**Committees:**  
Agriculture & Natural Resources, Chair  
Government Oversight and Reform  
Insurance  
Transportation

**Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**Senate Bill 16 — Sponsor Testimony**  
**Tuesday February 2, 2021**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 16.

Modeled after similar pieces of legislation that were recently enacted in various states, Senate Bill 16 enhances protections for Ohio's emergency service responders - professional and volunteer firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and police officers -- as well as their families.

Over the past several months, we have seen how our nation's emergency responders have been the targets of intimidation, harassment, and assault. Around the country, responders have been followed home, their property has been targeted, and their families intimidated. Here in Ohio, traffic cones have even been used to identify an officer's home so that protestors can find it, protestors show up to first responder's houses, and flyers containing threats to first responders have circulated throughout their own neighborhoods. This has caused many of these brave men and women to leave their careers because they no longer feel safe.

In order to alleviate these concerns that our responders and their families now face, this legislation ensures that those who attempt to intimidate, menace, or assault our responders or their families will face punishment. This language would also introduce penalties for incidents that occur in the line of duty, such as obstructing a responder's duty, the expulsion of objects or substances at them, the targeting of responder's eyes with a laser.

When it comes to responding to an emergency, language is included to cover penalties for the obstruction of roadways, prohibiting responders from traveling to an emergency, or prohibiting responders from exiting an emergency. If these actions should occur during a riot, the penalties would be increased.

Additionally, the bill will allow law enforcement officers to file a lawsuit against people or organizations who restrict the officer's civil rights during the performance of their duty or for filing a knowingly false complaint.

After the tragic scenes that all of us saw during last summer's riots that gripped our nation, it also was prudent to include language specifically focused on actions that take place during a riot. As such, the bill further protects responders and their family from the incitement of violence, and also protects from property destruction and the harassment of the public. Even greater, this language extends RICO liability to those who provide resources for a riot and those who organize a riot.

As a legislative body, we need to ensure that the men and women who bravely serve our communities are protected from those who vilify, target, and attack them for personal or political gain. It is our duty to show our support and offer this protection for all of our extraordinary emergency service responders.

Organizations supporting this legislation last general assembly included:

- Fraternal Order of Police
- Ohio Fire Chief's Association
- Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
- Northern Ohio Fire Fighters
- Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association
- Troopers for a Safer Ohio
- Buckeye State Sheriff's Association
- Police and Fire Retirees of Ohio
- Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters
- Ohio Ambulance and Medical Transportation Association

Thank you once again Chairman Manning and members of the committee for the opportunity to present this legislation to you today. I will be glad to answer any questions at this time.