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**Committees:**  
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**Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**Senate Bill 39 — Sponsor Testimony**  
**Tuesday February 9, 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 39.

This bill will update the statute of limitations and the records retention laws for crimes committed against peace officers. This issue was brought to me by a constituent, Lori Cooper, whose father, Nick Cooper, served as a Columbus Police officer.

The goal of this legislation, which will be called “Cooper’s Law” in memory of Officer Cooper, will be to treat all crimes against peace officers as cold cases if they are not immediately solved. Officer Cooper’s case was not in any status -- active, closed, or otherwise. It was as if it were merely hanging in the balance.

While on patrol in 1972, Officer Cooper was shot in his left arm while pursuing a burglary suspect in southeast Columbus, ultimately leading him to be personally disabled. The alleged shooter, Charles Hays, was indicted for the crime, but then posted bail and fled the state. He was then subsequently arrested and served time for other crimes in Kentucky and Connecticut.

Though the State of Ohio tried to extradite Hays to face charges in his home state, he was paroled in Connecticut and walked free. After that,

the State of Ohio lost track of Mr. Hays, and though initially indicted for his actions on that night in 1972, he was never brought to justice.

At that point, Lori Cooper launched her own investigation to track down Mr. Hays, due to frustrations with the handling of the case. Through this work, the case was brought to the attention of Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien, who picked up the cause and re-activated the case. However, due to the length of time that the State of Ohio failed to bring Mr. Hays before a judge, the case was dismissed due to his right to a speedy trial on constitutional grounds.

In order to deal with this situation, this bill eliminates the statute of limitations for felonious and/or aggravated assault if the victim is a peace officer. It also will exempt files related to crimes committed against peace officers from records retention schedule requirements adopted by any political subdivision so that those records are never destroyed.

It is my hope that by doing this, we can prevent similar situations from happening to other peace officers who are attacked in the line of duty and preserve the records needed to bring the perpetrators to justice.

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.