



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE, INC.

Chief Bruce Pijanowski
Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
Testimony in Support of SB 16

Chainman Manning, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My name is Bruce Pijanowski, the Chief of Police for the City of Delaware representing the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony in support of Senate Bill 16.

OACP is firmly in support of this bill for the support that it provides to emergency first responders. We have seen in the recent situations that have affected not only on duty police officers but has also spilled over to include their family and personal life. While the need for professional policing is a conversation that we are embracing as an organization, it is also imperative that protections exist for our first responders as they continue to handle high risk calls and events in the charged environment that now exists.

This legislation will provide protection, preferably as a deterrent, against those that seek to threaten, assault, or obstruct law enforcement officers. OACP is very clear on protecting first amendment rights, but in this legislation, we see a clear distinction in that it addresses obstructive activity that impacts public safety, and not protected free speech. It is important to recognize that these actions that are occurring not only adversely affect our first responders personally, but the distractions that they cause also adversely affect the innocent public that we are trying to protect.

OACP also supports the provisions in this legislation that would allow law enforcement officers who suffer and injury, death, or loss as a result of an obstructive act or a false complaint to initiate a civil action. It is the sad fact that currently in many of these cases we must ignore it and move on. It should not be an acceptable part of the job. Just as we embrace the conversations with the Governor's staff, the Attorney General's office, and members of the legislature in pursuing law enforcement improvement; so to do we embrace an environment where our first line responders are protected both criminally and civilly during the course of their duties. The impact on our retention of officers, the ability to recruit offices, and the ability to encourage officers to be engaged in our communities demands it.

I would like to thank Sen. Schaffer for introducing this important legislation, and respectfully request your support. Due to Covid restrictions, I can not testify in person, but would be happy to answer any questions remotely at a time and manner of your choosing.