



February 23, 2021

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair McColley and Ranking Member Thomas:

My name is Brandon Standley and I am the Chief of Police of the Bellefontaine Police Department. I have served the citizens of my community for 25 years, and have been chief since 2011. During my time as chief, I have been involved in a variety of issues pertaining to legislation that can assist law enforcement. As a Past President of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police and a current board member of the Ohio Municipal League's Ohio Association of Public Safety Directors, I offer my remarks today with a broad knowledge of issues impacting today's law enforcement and public safety departments.

I write in support of Senate Bill 16 as it directly relates to providing public safety personnel with a civil remedy when someone files a false complaint against them. When a false complaint is levied against a proud public servant, this can cause that public servant to doubt their credibility, and doubt that anyone truly cares when someone is lying about their character to get them in trouble. When a false complaint is filed against a public safety employee, it tends to cause the innocent employee anxiety, stress, criticism, and can damage their work ethic. Instead of proudly going about their duties in their normal, honorable way, false complaints can taint their heartfelt dedication to the work they do. Further, false complaints tend to take up a lot of time by the investigators and uses up resources that turn up to be wasted. Senate Bill 16 finally allows a public safety employee to fight for themselves by taking civil action against such false allegations. Many agencies file criminal charges against the offender too.

In today's society, too many times public officials are unfairly placed into a category that they somehow lied or cheated, or worse while performing their duties just because someone has made an allegation. This cannot become the normal. Instead, we must be able to provide our hardworking safety officials with an avenue to go after someone who's unfairly and unjustly attempted to ruin their hard work. In fact, I would suggest that the language in Senate Bill 16 may not even go far enough as it relates to the civil action. I would suggest that it should be as easy as possible for a public safety official to sue someone who has attempted to falsely accuse

them of some wrongdoing. It should not be difficult to prove this in a civil action. The weight and the burden of the civil action should be on the person that placed the false allegation to prove that the public safety official did something wrong. It should not be the burden of the public safety official to prove that they did everything the right way in such civil action. Any documents, or any other evidence that proves that the civil suit is worthy of consideration, should be released for the civil proceedings upon a lawful request. For example, if a police agency has investigated a false complaint and holds the records and documents that proves that the allegation was false, all documents, papers, et, should be made available to the employee upon request to use those items in their civil claim.

I also rise to support the portions of this legislation that aids in the prosecution of those who would ever threaten the family of a hero. This has happened all too often in our society, without recourse. This is a disturbing trend and must be halted. Our families suffer enough with worry and concern, and should not have to tolerate abuse of any kind by the lawless. Prosecutors must rise to the occasion during these times and be prepared to criminally charge.

Finally, I rise in support of Senate Bill 16's effort to address rioting and the unlawful abuses that we saw over the summer of 2020. Throughout the delicate weeks of several riots around Ohio and around the United States, we saw lawless groups of criminals attempt to not only attack public safety officials, but harass innocent business owners and residents just trying to work. In addition, they burnt police cars, buildings, fire trucks, police precincts, and more. This didn't accomplish anything but cause a greater divide in our country, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in overtime to pay for our front-line safety forces. This should not be how we manage hard topics. This is how the freedom to protest becomes harmed. This is how innocent people are harmed from work, from safety, from the ability to walk about freely, and more. In fact, it stopped some of our nation from being able to properly govern safely. Violence, looting, threatening, and harassment must stop. This legislation can help with identifying better ways to impose sanctions on those responsible for such acts in Ohio. This is long overdue. It is not okay for innocent citizens to be threatened by groups or individuals that happen to be in the wrong place, at the wrong time. Innocent civilians who are attempting to just go to work should not have to worry about a group of protestors blocking the streets and not allowing free passage. This is a free country, but with laws.

This legislation provides protections to those who need it. It is not far-reaching because it properly addresses certain situations that were proven to place innocent Ohioans at risk of injury or worse. It also properly provides our heroes an opportunity to defend against wrong and false complaints. This may help reduce the number of false complaints that are filed. Hopefully this would make false complainants think twice. This also increases abilities to go after groups or individuals that are attempting to use violence and rioting as a means to get their point across. Riots tend to lessen the ability for anything good to come of an issue. Instead, riots bleed into larger and larger problems because no one is managing the entire situation. Too often, lone actors or groups infiltrate a protest to bring on violence in the name of some cause. Not likely anyone will recall what the issue is when buildings are burning and people are dying, or laying

injured. Instead, the real issues are better served when adults can listen to one another and share different views without threats of violence, or acts of violence.

I urge your support of Senate Bill 16.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chief Brandon Standley

Bellefontaine Police Department