



Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association

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Executive Director
Senate Bill 16
Proponent Testimony
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Chairman Manning, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 16. This is a bill that we feel provides several important updates to our criminal law in response to events that have taken place over the last year that have placed police, other emergency service responders, some public servants, and their families in harms way. It also responds to more widespread dangers to the public that were on display. While we are supportive of the bill as a whole, our members are most supportive of two aspects of the bill.

First, we strongly support the greater protection that the bill will offer to our police and emergency service responders and their families. The bill does this by increasing the penalties when they are the victims of offenses like felonious assault, assault, menacing, inciting to violence, and intimidation. Our organization typically opposes legislation that increases penalties for special classes of victims. But we have in the past and continue to make exceptions for the most vulnerable, those like children and the elderly, and for those who put their lives on the line in the name of public safety. Senate Bill 16 falls squarely within this latter category. An assault on the police and on those who set out each day to protect the public is a broader threat to public safety that deserves a harsher punishment.

Second, we strongly support the new offense of unlawfully impeding public passage. This is where the bill really gets to the heart of some of the more widespread dangers that were created in the last year. Impeding public passage is not just an inconvenience for those who might simply have to find a different route. It can prevent police from responding to violence, EMS from responding to medical emergencies and from making it to the hospital, fire departments from responding to burning buildings, and can place those who may simply be stuck in traffic in grave danger.

The penalty enhancements in the bill provide prosecutors with some additional measures that should help keep our police, our emergency service responders, and by extension our communities safer. They will give us a greater ability to secure justice for those who set out to promote the public's safety and will hopefully help prevent acts like impeding public passage that place many at greater risk.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on this bill, thank Sen. Schaffer for his work and advocacy on behalf of law enforcement and other emergency service personnel, and encourage the committee's favorable consideration of this bill.