



To: Members of the Criminal Justice Committee

From: David P. Byrnes, Director of Public Safety  
City of Brook Park, Ohio

Date: March 7, 2017

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee:

I am David Byrnes, and I am the Director of Public Safety for the City of Brook Park, Ohio and I am a proponent of House Bill 38.

The City of Brook Park is in Cuyahoga County and borders the City of Cleveland on its southwestern border. It is a City of approximately 19,000 residents. In my capacity as the Safety Director, I direct the members of the Brook Park Police, Fire and EMS services in the City of Brook Park. To be clear our EMS services are provide through our fire department as opposed to a third service.

Our Department of Public Safety responds to almost 40,000 calls for service each year. Eighty percent (80%) of those calls for service require the response of members of the Police Department. Our Police respond to just under 100 calls each 24-hour period. Most calls result in one of my officers having multiple contacts with several people each call. That means our Police Department has more than 1000 person-to-person contacts every week. It is a testament to their professionalism that out of these thousands of personal contacts annually I only receive about a half dozen calls of complaint each year, and frankly almost all of them prove to be meaningless when they are investigated. I imagine all cities of similar size and population share similar statistics.

Given the huge number of person-to-person contacts from Police and other public safety personnel in our State it is time that we further protect the first responders that have taken an oath to protect us. During the past 24 months, our national news contained story after story of assaults and injuries suffered by many of our Police Officers and other first responders. Increasing the penalties for individuals that commit assaults against our first responders will make a strong statement regarding the value our State places on the welfare of our Police, Fire and EMS personnel. On a local level, we do all that we can to protect our employees in the field but one thing we cannot do is legislate stiffer penalties for citizens that harm our safety force members.

As a retired professional Fire Fighter and EMS provider, I am keenly aware of the dangers faced by fire departments and EMS providers in Ohio. There is no question



that those public safety functions are extremely dangerous. However an occurring fire is unable to intend itself to harm anyone. Our Police, however face a very different and intended threat. Each day my patrol officers wear bulletproof vests all during their working shifts. They wear these vests because we have people living among us that given the opportunity INTEND to injure those police officers and are able to direct their anger toward them.

By passing house Bill 38, the General Assembly will make a strong statement to those who design to cause harm to our police, first responders and military members that this behavior will not be tolerated in Ohio. Further and equally important we will also signal a message to our citizens who are members of the military, first responders and police officers in Ohio that we value their personal safety and intend to punish those who interfere with them and causes or jeopardizes their safety.

I will be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you.