

Good Morning, honorable committee members. My name is Rebecca Muncy Brooks. I am here to tell you why Amd SB 296 is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation you will have the opportunity to pass this session and perhaps in your career. With this legislation you have the opportunity to help the men and women who have given their lives for you, your family and your community. You have the opportunity to fulfill promises made to their families the day they died; those promises were that their families would be taken care of for life.

On April 5, 1995, my husband, Marc Muncy, an officer with the Columbus Division of Police, was working the westside of town when he answered a call for backup. While in route to help his fellow officer, Marc was involved in a car accident that ultimately took his life. In that instant I became a 31-year-old widow with two small children to raise alone. My daughter, Eryne had just turned 4 years old, and my son, Zachary was one.

Marc was the consummate family man who adored his children. He worked hard to provide the best possible life for his family. Marc's

dream was to raise our children in the country, with land, a pond and lots of trees. He had just started putting his dreams into action the weekend before he died. He spent that entire weekend planting 400 white pine trees with the hope of having years to watch the trees grow and develop as his children grew and developed too. Unfortunately, he died without seeing the fruits of his labor grow. He died without being able to teach his son how to be a man. He died without being able to walk his little girl down the aisle on her wedding day. He also, died believing his family would be taken care of in the same manner they would have had he lived. I tell you this because I think it is important for you to have a little insight as to what family meant to Marc and what family means to all of our officers...family is and was everything to each and every one of them.

Marc was just beginning to advance in his career. He was the next officer in line to be promoted to Sergeant and was simply waiting for the ceremony and official paperwork to go through...unfortunately, he died before seeing that dream fulfilled. The agency promoted him posthumously to Sergeant at his funeral and while it was a well-deserved

gesture, it was in name only. Because of a technicality, in that his official promotion date was after he died, his family did not get full advantage of the promotional benefits he worked hard to earn.

Little did Marc know when he died that his pension would eventually be cut in half at the absolute earliest date that he would have been eligible to retire, a full eight years before that of his classmates who have opted to be a part of the Deferred Retirement Option Program or DROP. During the sponsor's testimony, a question came up as to the number of officers who go on to stay an extended period of time after the earliest retirement date. While I do not know over all numbers, I can tell you that out of all of my husband's classmates, all but six (6) officers are still working and participating in the drop program. Of those six officers, two are no longer working because they passed away, one retired due to being 65+ at her twenty-five year point, one just recently retired (after 30 years with the agency), and one left the agency for another job. As you can see the percentage of officers who stay past 25 years is quite high and I have no doubt that my husband would have stayed and taken full advantage of the DROP program as well.

Officers are told daily that if anything happens to them, they will never need to worry about their family...they will be taken care of for life. Sadly, that is not true.

The years went by quickly as I was raising my children as a single parent. I still had one child in high school, while the other had started college when I received a letter from the Ohio Police and Fire Pension. That letter informed me that Marc would be eligible for the earliest date possible for retirement within the next two months. It was in this letter that I found out that Marc's benefit would be slashed to just 50% of his base pay. This was not the future my husband had planned for his family. As I mentioned earlier, he was set to be promoted to Sergeant and was already talking about taking the Lieutenants test as soon as he was eligible. He was always planning for his family's future. A future we lost the night he died trying to help his fellow officers protect our city.

Those few out of my husband's class who chose to retire at the earliest possible time received a pension which was 60% of their pay. There are some who retire due to disability issues and they receive a pension which was based on 75% of their pay. To be frank, what could

be more disabled than dead and yet the families of those who died in the line of duty received pensions reduced to a significantly lower percentage than any other officer.

Passage of this legislation will provide my family with similar income advantages we would have received had Marc not died in the line of duty. I say similar because Marc's ability to fulfill his goal of moving his way up through the ranks and providing more for his family ended the night he died. No more promotions or any other means to make extra money died with him. He did die however, believing his family would be taken care of if the unthinkable happened. That is what they are told and promised. Passage of this legislation will demonstrate to all officers that their families will indeed be taken care of should they give the ultimate sacrifice for their communities.