

Good afternoon Chairman Coley, Vice Chairman Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 137. This legislation seeks to mandate all county and municipal peace officers to report child abuse and neglect.

I support House Bill 137 because I believe Peace Officers should be required to report child abuse. They are supposed to keep everyone safe right?? Shouldn't that include children?? If peace officers don't protect the kids then who will? The people who are hurting the kids will keep hurting them and that's not ok. Kids deserve better than that. All kids should have the right to grow up happy and healthy and receive help if they are not.

Kids are always told if they need help, go find an officer. If an officer could help me if I am lost, why can't they help me if I'm being hurt? My mom is a social worker and she said she has to tell if she knows a child is being abused or neglected. I looked up the list of people who are required to report in Ohio. I was surprised to see that people who take care of your ears, feet and animals are listed. How often would these people see a kid that needs help? I think peace officers should be included to the list because they see more kids in situations where they need help. I wonder how it would feel to know your job is to protect and serve but you don't protect the ones that need it the most, the ones that don't have a voice, the ones that count on the adults to help them.

I had to depend on an officer to help me once. When I was 2 weeks old, an officer found my birthmom wondering the airport with me. She couldn't take proper care of me and I went to foster care. I was lucky, because I found my family. But what about the other kids out there that need help like I did? What happens to them? If peace officers are added to the list of required reporters, it will help kids feel safer, protected and give them a chance. That's why I believe in this bill and feel it should be passed.

Thank you!