



# Chillicothe Police Department

28 North Paint Street • Chillicothe, Ohio 45601 • Phone (740) 773-1191 / Fax (740) 779-2802

Keith A. Washburn – Chief of Police

Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of Senate Bill 1. I am Detective Derek Wallace and this is Chief Keith Washburn with the Chillicothe Police Department. We come here today from the “First Capital City” of Chillicothe, which is a “small town” community about one hour and 30 minutes south of here. We have a population of around 25,000 people, our area is surrounded with rolling hills, factories, small town businesses and 2 of the state’s Prisons. I tell you all of this so you get an idea of how we are affected by the gripping drug of Fentanyl. We started noticing Fentanyl in our community several years ago, when Heroin started to flow regularly through our area. We have since seen an increase in Fentanyl and Carfentanyl in our area that has been a key factor in several deaths. Over the last year, our Overdoses calls for service, along with Overdose related deaths have increased. In 2016 alone, we had 295 reported Overdose victims, with 45 reported Overdose Deaths. These are only reported numbers, there were estimated another 50 to 100 Overdoses that were not reported. We have started joint partnerships with different agency across the state to help in this fight and this is just one more partnerships we hope to gain. We have been working with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, Drug Enforcement Agency and the Ross County Heroin Partnership Project to fight this dangerous drug that has flooded into our community and throughout the state. We understand we are a small area, but we have talked to surrounding counties and agency throughout the state that are seeing the similar problem in their area. We have started to have other county agencies contact out department for guidance and help as they are just now seeing the increase in Fentanyl in their communities.

We started seeing increases in the Fentanyl related cases in our area roughly a year ago. We started an investigation into a known drug dealer in our area, who was believed to have been the cause of some overdoses. We were able to make several controlled buys from this suspect and conducted a search warrant at the home where the drugs were being sold. During the search we were able to recover 31.91 grams of what we believed to be Heroin at the time. The suspect was booked into jail in Ross County on a Felony of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree for the Possession of 10 grams but less than 50 grams of Heroin. There were other drugs seized from the same suspect such as Cocaine and MDMA and large amounts of cash. Once we received the reports from the Crime Lab on the items submitted we found the Heroin was in fact Fentanyl. Once this report was submitted for a Grand Jury hearing we had to make changes to the charges filed. Our Felony 2 charge was now changed to a Felony 4 charge because the “bulk” amounts for Fentanyl were much higher. We found that it took 20 grams of Fentanyl to “bump” up the degree of Felony of Fentanyl based substance. This is just



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one of many cases in our area that have fell victim to such changes. We have a drug that is said to be 30 to 50 times stronger and more potent than Heroin but the laws do not reflect this at that time.

I started looking into the matter and came across Senate Bill 237, introduced by Senator LaRose. I asked for permission from Chief Washburn to contact Senator LaRose to see if we could do anything to help this bill along. Now this is not common practice with our department, but we needed to do something as our death toll was rising. When I made contact with Senator LaRose's office, I was advised that they did not have a lot of information from around the state as to what different departments were seeing. I provided Senator LaRose's office at that time what we had in our community. However since that time the problem of Fentanyl based substance in our community has grown. We now are seeing around 95% of our drug cases where Heroin is involved are actually Fentanyl cases. We have also found that our Fentanyl cases have direct links to the Columbus, Cincinnati and Dayton areas. Law Enforcement as whole in the State of Ohio has not seen any Fentanyl production labs in Ohio. We believe this drug is being shipped into our area from other States and Countries. However we also know that it is just a matter of time before someone starts producing this product locally. We have seen this in the past with Methamphetamine.

We continue to try different tactics to help slow the problem but it is a slow process. We know from talking to users and dealers several different issues. From the Dealers we know they are aware of "bulk" amounts throughout the State of Ohio and know how much they can possess before they get increased penalties. Most of these dealers in our area will stay under the known amounts to receive less punishment if caught. We also know that most travel outside of our area to obtain the drugs, which shows these issues are not just in our community. From the Users we know they are seeking out the Fentanyl based substance because they feel they are getting a better "high" from the Fentanyl. Most however don't know the risk of death until it is too late. Once that user has to be revived by Narcan due to them overdosing, they try to choose another path, but most are not successful. The grip this drug has on the users is strong. Users have told us that one dose is all it takes to have some "hook" on this drug. Some have tried rehab and detox centers but even sometimes that does not work in curbing the need, craving or want for the drug. Today we have information that more dealers are carrying both Heroin and Fentanyl based substance and giving the user a choice between the drugs, and most are choosing the Fentanyl.

We also would reference the danger of Fentanyl based substance to Law Enforcement but also the general public. This is a drug that can be absorbed through the skin and can be air bound and inhaled. Someone that comes in contact with this drug not knowing what it is could suffer from an Overdose and not know the why.



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We also know that being present inside homes where children are around. This drug is not like Crack Cocaine where holding or touching the drug does not create a high risk of exposure. If a child was to come into contact with the drug there is a greater chance that the child would die from the exposure. Law Enforcement Officers across the country have cases where officer have been exposed to Fentanyl on daily calls and caused sever heath issues. We have also seen this in our community where we have a pending case where a traffic stop was conducted and the suspect placed drugs into their mouth while being removed from the vehicle. In an effort to recover the drugs the offices took action and attempted to remove the items from the suspect's mouth. However the officers did not have time to put on gloves to protect themselves from not only the suspect's personal body fluids but also the drugs that were attempted to be hiding or destroyed. Once in the back of the cruiser and arriving at the county jail the suspect had the drugs hanging out of their mouth and officers attempted to remove the item. It was later found the drug that was inside the bag and inside the mouth of the suspect was 11 grams of Fentanyl.

So why do we stand to support such changes in the laws of Fentanyl. First we would say because of how deadly this drug is and how we have seen it affect our small community, and heard of how it affects other counties across the state. We would agree with Senator LaRose that we need to be able to offer help to the users who are caught with this drug. We need to help the users, so that they no longer create the demand for the drug which in turn may stop dealers from supplying the drug. We would also agree the dealers needed stiffer penalties and punishment for supplying the drug. In our area we know that the drug problem creates multiple other criminal problems in the area. Most of the users turn to Robbing and Stealing be able to gain money to supply their addiction. So we believe if we are able to slow the drug problems we slow the other crimes as well. Second we would say again that if you have a drug that is 30 to 50 times more potent then another there should be more potent penalties with Possessing or Trafficking the drug. Lastly all Law Enforcement Officers across the state took an Oath to up hold and enforce all the laws set forth by the State of Ohio, to protect and serve the citizens of our communities, and the State of Ohio. So this is a way to protect and serve the communities and state we represent, by bring these issues to where change can be made.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. We would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.



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