



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE, INC.

Testimony in Support of HB 296
Heinz von Eckartsberg, Dublin Police Department
Representing the OACP

Greetings Chairman Bacon, Vice Chairman Dolan, and ranking member Thomas. My name is Chief Heinz von Eckartsberg and I represent the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support to H.B. 296.

This proposed legislation would enhance penalties for certain drug offenses that occur within 1,000 feet of a “community addiction services provider.” As an example, the current statute states that aggravated trafficking in drugs is a felony of the 4th degree. Under this legislation, if the crime is committed within 1,000 feet of a community addiction services provider, the new penalty would be a 3rd degree felony.

As you all know, Ohio has been ground zero for the nation’s fight against opioid abuse and addiction. Many of our member’s have seen the ravages of drug addiction in their communities, and have worked to develop efforts to solve this problem, in many cases, working with addicts to help get them treatment. Unfortunately, when they make that difficult decision to finally get treatment they remain vulnerable to their need for drugs, making it difficult for many to complete treatment and get clean. Drug traffickers that target these people, where they are most vulnerable, can be their biggest threat to defeating their fledgling attempt at sobriety.

Spending money to help those addicted defeat their disease is vital, and important. Giving law enforcement the tools to protect them where they are most vulnerable is important as well.

Although we support this legislation, we would encourage an amendment to the existing bill to include language that adds the offense of “trafficking in a fentanyl-related compound” to the list of offenses that can be enhanced.

The OACP feels that this legislation will help law enforcement ensure that those seeking treatment can do so in a safe and less stressful environment.

Thank you for your consideration and for allowing me to provide written testimony to the committee.