



## **HB 310 Proponent Testimony Senate Education Committee**

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide written comments in support of HB 310.

I would like to commend Representative Greenspan for his work in crafting HB 310, and Chairwoman Lehner for her commitment to addressing the practice of hazing. I am going to confine my testimony to the provisions of HB 310 that address hazing, which is a heinous practice that has subjected too many Ohioans to emotional and physical harm.

As you know, this bill is named for Collin Wiant who tragically lost his life during his freshman year in college. Ohio University has zero tolerance for hazing, and has been part of the stakeholder effort led by Senator Kunze, along with Collin Wiant's mother, Kathleen, aimed at developing recommendations to prevent hazing in Ohio.

Because of the way the law is currently structured in Ohio, hazing is rarely pursued in criminal prosecutions. The penalties are too low and the burdens of prosecution too high. This has resulted in a situation where I believe the current law does not provide an effective deterrent to this insidious practice.

HB 310, or Collins Law, changes that. It expands the definition of hazing; increases hazing penalties; and creates an offense for failure to report hazing.

Specifically, HB 310 increases the offense of hazing from what is now a 4<sup>th</sup> degree misdemeanor, to a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree misdemeanor. It also creates a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree felony offense for hazing through forced consumption of alcohol or drugs that results in serious physical harm. Finally, it creates an offense for failure to report hazing—a 4<sup>th</sup> degree misdemeanor for failure to report that an individual has suffered or is threatened with hazing or a 1<sup>st</sup> degree misdemeanor in instances where the hazing in question results in serious injury.

I know that Senator Kunze and Kathleen Wiant have shared the recommendations that came from the stakeholder group I participated in, which include: 1) deterring hazing through additional graduated penalties; 2) fostering greater awareness, education and training on campuses to combat hazing; and 3) providing true transparency for students and parents to know when and where hazing has occurred.

Recognizing that time is short, it may be difficult to address all of the recommendations from this stakeholder group that extend beyond HB 310, but I am hopeful that there may at least be time to consider the recommendations that will create more universal and uniform anti-hazing policies at universities and colleges across Ohio. Perhaps even more importantly, I believe the recommendation to have transparent reporting of hazing violations is an important tool to expose bad actors to students and parents alike.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views on this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Andrew D. Powers  
Chief of Police