

3rd House District

Wood County

Columbus Office

Vern Riffe Center

77 South High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111

614.466.8104

Rep03@ohiohouse.gov



HARAZ N. GHANBARI

State Representative | Ohio House District 3

Committees

Finance
Energy and Natural Resources
Armed Services and Veterans Affairs
Higher Education
Insurance

Subcommittees

Finance Subcommittee on Primary
and Secondary Education
Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Energy Generation

December 16, 2020

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and honorable Senators of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 539.

House Bill 539, which grants Township Trustees the permissive authority to allow their township law enforcement officers to patrol and enforce the laws on stretches of interstate highway that run their jurisdiction, recently passed the House Criminal Justice Committee unanimously for the second time and subsequently passed with strong bipartisan support 73-20 on the House Floor.

Northwest Ohio, in my district, is known as the crossroads of America. We have a major north/south route known as Interstate 75, a major east/west route known as the Ohio Turnpike, and other routes like 475, 23 and 280. Beyond what we know about the flow of dangerous drugs like fentanyl, we are also aware of criminal enterprises like organized retail crime, sex trafficking, and human trafficking. All of these involve the interstate.

These crimes of opportunity are targeting our communities. We have all read the headlines, and have spoken with constituents in our communities who have been impacted. Referencing the collaborative efforts of law enforcement agencies, Ohio Attorney General David Yost was recently quoted in a news article announcing the arrest of 14 men in a human trafficking operation. The attorney general said these arrests, "... serve as a reminder that these crimes are more prevalent and closer to home than you may think."

While the passage of House Bill 539 will greatly enhance the interagency collaboration to address examples of criminal activity as mentioned above, it will also reduce accidents involving the motoring public therefore saving lives, preventing injuries, and helping to keep all of us safe. I recently asked the Ohio State Highway Patrol's Statistical Analysis Unit for a five-year recap of crashes in Wood County. During the period from Jan. 1, 2015 to June 8, 2020, there were 19,665 crashes in Wood County with Interstate 75 having the highest number of crashes during that time with 3,528. The facts are clear and protecting Ohioans is the genius of this bill with my joint sponsor Representative Gil Blair.

For example, Perrysburg Township, in my district of Wood County, has approximately eight miles of Interstate 75 within their jurisdiction; however, current revised code does not permit townships with less than 50,000 residents to patrol and enforce laws on our interstate system. Passage of House Bill 539 will enable departments such as Perrysburg Township to work collaboratively and seamlessly with other agencies such as the Ohio State Highway Patrol and others to help reduce these staggering statistics.

As a direct result of our collaborative interested party meetings, the following checks and balances were incorporated into House Bill 539:

- The highway is part of the interstate highway system
- The township has a population between 5,000 and 50,000 residents
- Township trustees through resolution have granted authority to patrol the applicable interstate highway
- The interstate highway is located within the township officer's jurisdiction
- There is a permanent access point on and off the interstate highway located within the jurisdiction and open to the public

Board of County Commissioners

Doris I. Herringshaw, Ed.D. Craig LaHote Dr. Theodore H. Bowlus



February 27, 2020

The Honorable Haraz Ghanbari
Ohio State Representative
77 S. High Street
13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: Township Officer Patrol and Enforcement Authority on Interstate Highways

Dear Haraz:

We are in support of your forthcoming legislation that will permit a township law enforcement officer to patrol and enforce specified traffic offenses on certain interstate highways if authorized by that township's board of trustees.

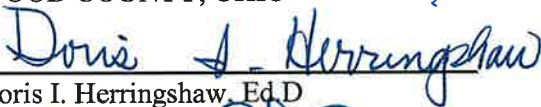
This is an important issue for both Lake Township and Perrysburg Township in Wood County. Both townships have heavy traffic on interstates and state roadways that are classified as part of the national highway system running through their townships. These townships both have police departments funded by township tax dollars.


We believe it is appropriate that the township trustees determine whether their township police departments provide enforcement on the interstate highways within their jurisdiction. Township trustees are best equipped to evaluate the safety needs of their communities and decide where to focus their police resources.

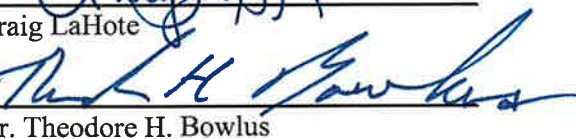
We have great confidence in the law enforcement work performed on the interstate highways by the Wood County Sheriff's Office and the Ohio State Highway Patrol and believe that additional police officers will only provide greater safety to our residents and those traveling through Wood County.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS,
WOOD COUNTY, OHIO


Doris I. Herringshaw, Ed.D.


Craig LaHote


Dr. Theodore H. Bowlus

cc: BCC
Theresa Gavarone, Ohio State Senator



Perrysburg Township, *Established 1823*
26609 Lime City Road Perrysburg, Ohio 43551
Phone: 419.872.8861 Fax: 419.872.8889

www.perrysburgtownship.us

TRUSTEES
Gary Britten
Robert Mack
Joe Schaller

FISCAL OFFICER
Shirley A. Haar

ADMINISTRATOR
Walter J. Celley

March 4, 2020

The Honorable Haraz Ghanbari
Ohio State Representative
77 S. High Street
13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: House Bill 539 – Township Officer Arrest Authority on Interstate Highways

Dear Representative Ghanbari:

We understand that the Bill “allowing” Township law enforcement officers to enforce certain traffic offenses on interstate highways in Ohio is making some headway and perhaps gaining traction after being stalled and debated for the past few years.

Meanwhile, the Township Police Department remains a lead agency in the interdiction of illegal commerce traversing Wood County and specifically Perrysburg Township. Our position remains steadfast: we do not want to overlook illegal activities and/or trafficking of any sort within our boundaries, and we ask for the Ohio Legislature to move forward with revisions to the Code.

We thank you for your efforts in the past and we urge you to move forward to remove the handcuffs currently placed on very capable agencies, such as Perrysburg Township and neighboring Lake Township, and allow our trained professionals to do their job without restraint.

We thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Perrysburg Township Board of Trustees

Robert P. Mack

Gary Britten

Joseph Schaller

Notice: Ohio has a very broad public records law. Most written communications to or from Perrysburg Township officials/employees regarding Township business are public records available to the public and media. This communication may be subject to public disclosure.



May 21, 2020

The Honorable Haraz Ghanbari
Ohio State Representative
77 S. High Street
13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Township Officer Patrol and Enforcement Authority on Interstate Highways

Dear Representative Ghanbari:

We are in support of your forthcoming legislation that will permit a township law enforcement officer to patrol and enforce specified traffic offenses on certain interstate highways if authorized by that township's board of trustees.

This is an important issue for both Lake Township and Perrysburg Township in Wood County. Both townships have heavy traffic on interstates and state roadways that are classified as part of the national highway system running through their townships. These townships both have police departments funded by township tax dollars.

We believe it is appropriate that the township trustees determine whether their township police departments provide enforcement on the interstate highways within their jurisdiction. Township trustees are best equipped to evaluate the safety needs of their communities and decide where to focus their police resources.

We have great confidence in the law enforcement work performed on the interstate highways by the Wood County Sheriff's Office and the Ohio State Highway Patrol and believe that additional police officers will only provide greater safety to our residents and those traveling through Wood County.

Sincerely,

Tim Krugh
Board of Education President
Lake Local Schools

Jim Witt
Superintendent
Lake Local Schools