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December 12, 2020

Chairman Eklund and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony for House Bill 539 on behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association.

House Bill 539 gives permissive authority to townships to permit their law enforcement officers to patrol a stretch of interstate highway that runs through their jurisdiction, so long as there are access points on and off the roadway within the township boundaries.

In Wood County, we have a portion of I-280 that runs through Lake Township. This stretch of highway carries a large amount of traffic on a daily basis as the road serves as a primary route from Michigan and intersects with a number of highways in our area.

With the large amount of traffic comes an increase in the number of traffic accidents for which our fire departments and EMS are responsible for responding to. Additionally, with so many major highways intersecting, this stretch of I-280 has also been used a major route for drug and human trafficking.

By allowing our township police to patrol this stretch of highway, we can reduce the number of accidents and ultimately improve the safety of our roadway for our communities. The law enforcement presence will also help to deter or apprehend individuals conducting illicit activity via this route. While our troopers do an excellent job, the reality is they do not have the resources and manpower to do it all on their own. Having the township police being able to support their patrol efforts will be a great asset for them.

I urge your support of this important piece of legislation as it will provide greater public safety for townships throughout Ohio who might have a similar situation to Lake Township.

Respectfully,

Chief Bruce Moritz  
Lake Township Fire Department  
Wood County

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