

Opponent Testimony for Sub. HB 539

I would respectfully argue that the reason legislatures in the past have not made this change is because it is bad for public safety.

The law enforcement and public safety needs found on an interstate highway are enormously different from those in a township. It is for this reason that we have the Ohio Highway Patrol, a group of dedicated officers to deal (nearly exclusively) with matters on interstate highways.

Ohio is not unique in this, in fact, quite a lot of states give citation and arrest powers on interstate highways *solely* to their states' highway patrols.

This state wisely chose to create a highway patrol instead of having local and county law enforcement deal with matters on rural interstate highways. Police officials with both job duties would struggle to do both well as the jobs are incompatible with each other.

A township officer who is on the highway is not well placed for quickly handling public safety matters in their township.

By all means, under current law township police can be on highways and help with emergencies when and where needed. But the status quo means that it is not a secondary, conflicting job duty for that officer.

The proposed bill incentivizes¹ the placement of township officers on highways, which would be a new duty that makes their jobs harder and reduces public safety in the townships.

When and where recurring public safety issues occur on interstate highways is best handled by highway patrol. The extra help of township offices in emergencies is always appreciated, but adding that duty to township officers' other duties is a public safety mistake.

Township officers need to be near their townships' residents and businesses, not hanging around the highway.

¹ Due to a long list of non-speeding offenses whose fines are part-diverted into the township's general fund.