



# BUCKEYE STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee on  
House Bill 62

March 12, 2019

Chairman Rob McColley and members of the committee, my name is Matt Lutz and I currently serve as the Sheriff of Muskingum County in Zanesville, Ohio and the President of the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association. I am here today representing our association in opposition to the removal of the front license plate on motor vehicles.

As I'm sure you are all aware, our Deputies are given the task of protecting our citizens and their property in the state of Ohio. We are also tasked with serving warrants, recovering stolen vehicles, searching for missing and abducted children and adults as well as enforcing Ohio's traffic laws to help curb traffic crashes and traffic related deaths. As you review this list please consider that we are also the first responders to such things as homicides, burglaries in progress, breaking & entering's as well as domestic violence. In all of these examples, almost all of the time there will be vehicles involved. It is very common for suspects to use vehicles to get to their crime and to get away from their crime. The ability

to identify these vehicles and suspects will be cut in half. That's what will happen if HB 62 passes.

The front license plate is a tool used by law enforcement. It has helped us to identify many crimes and suspects in cases like I have described above. To take away the front license plate would be taking away a huge advantage law enforcement has over the suspects we pursue. As we are driving to the scene of a crime our deputies are watching for suspect vehicles. The front plate helps us make sure we locate the right vehicle. If it wasn't there, we would be creating an unsafe environment for our deputies as they would have to pass a vehicle and then look behind them to see if the plate matches. In some cases, there is no license plate reported. So, in these cases it is even more important to have the front plate to log possible suspect vehicles that the deputy may see on the way in to a crime. Even things like passing a stopped school bus would be hindered by this law because bus drivers would have a hard time identifying the vehicle from a back plate.

No front license plate allows Deputies to stop those cars and interact with those in the vehicle. Traffic stops are a direct way law enforcement disrupts criminal activity. There have been many times that deputies have made traffic stops on vehicles for no front license plate and they have proven that they were on their way to or from a crime. Again, if HB 62 passes it will eliminate one of law enforcement's opportunities to disrupt criminal activity.

In closing, we, as Sheriffs, have heard the arguments for the passage of HB 62. Our argument is this:

The consumer saving \$25-\$300 per car that costs \$20,000 to \$50,000 to purchase does not seem relevant.

To worry about the technology and the design in bumpers or the inability to trade cars with neighboring states would be minute compared to solving crimes, recovering children and putting criminals in jail.

To reduce the RISK for dealers when ordering cars would pale in comparison to the RISK of a Deputy that is walking up on a car with no front plate that could identify that vehicle involved in a crime or a suspect associated with that vehicle.

We understand that the great State of Ohio must tighten its belt and find ways to reduce spending, cut costs and generate revenue. We understand that infrastructure is vitally important to each of us and we have recently supported the Governor in raising the gas tax. However, when you are talking about the estimated 1.5 million dollars that this bill could save, I would argue that we have faith in our Governor and these costs would be better suited to be saved somewhere else. Don't tighten the restrictions on Law Enforcement, don't take away a tool that we use to disrupt criminal activity and don't take away a tool that helps protect the lives of law enforcement, helps identify suspects and helps us take criminals off the street. I'm sure that the possibility of the loss of life, increased and unsolved crimes and the reduction of opportunities to solve these crimes far outweighs the amount of money some are trying to save. Think of it this way, if you were a victim or your family was a victim, what would it be worth to you to have the crime solved and that criminal put behind bars.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to be here and to also present testimony. I would be glad to take any questions.

Respectfully,

Matthew J. Lutz  
Muskingum County Sheriff  
President – Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association