



**FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE OF OHIO, INC.**

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**Testimony on Am. Sub. HB 62**

**Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee**

March 13, 2019

Chairman McColley and members of the Committee,

My name is Mike Weinman, and I am here to give opposition testimony to a provision in HB 62 that eliminates the requirement for a front license plate on behalf of the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio, Inc. (FOP). I am a retired Columbus police officer, who currently serves as the director of government affairs for the FOP. The FOP of Ohio consists of 26,000 law enforcement professionals in municipal, county, township, and most state law enforcement agencies (including OSP, OIU, ODNR, BCI, and others) that risk their lives daily protecting members of our communities.

The requirement that a vehicle registered in the State of Ohio display a front license plate is an incredible tool for both the public and law enforcement. Front plates have been used to identify:

- OVI drivers
- Road Ragers
- Hit-Skip drivers
- Gas drive-offs
- Organized retail theft suspects
- Arsonists
- Murders
- Terrorists

Consider that 70 percent of all serious crimes involve a motor vehicle in the United States. Additionally, from 2007 to 2017, a vehicle has been used 983 times as a weapon in a violent crime in Ohio.

Gas drive-offs, shopliftings, bank robberies, and convenience store robberies, are a few examples of crimes that almost always involve a car and the loss of funds, property, and life. Front license plates nearly double the chances of identifying these criminals. Agencies have used front license plates read by eyewitnesses and seen in surveillance cameras, dash cameras, and body cameras to make arrests for these crimes.

Chairman Rob McColley

March 13, 2019

Page 2

Police agencies across the State have been deploying automated license plate readers to recover stolen cars and make apprehensions. Funded primarily through federal grants the readers are attached to police cruisers and can read the plates of vehicles parked or traveling toward the cruisers. In some cases, the readers are permanently affixed. The toll booths at the turnpike are an example. The readers are wired into computers that use the State's law enforcement automated database (LEADS), and the federal law enforcement databases such as NCIC. The machines give a visual and audible alert to officers that the vehicle is stolen, or involved or suspected to be involved in a crime, or the registered owner is wanted or suspected of a crime.

A lot has been said concerning the cost savings gained by eliminating the front license plate. But, I would argue that the benefits of having the front plate far outweigh any perceived savings. The apprehension of suspects who have committed heinous crimes as a result of the front license plate is incalculable.

Finally, the elimination of the front plates creates millions of license plates out of service that is already in the public. The FOP questions whether a take-back program would need to be initiated to prevent "plate-splitting," valid paired plates being used twice. These plates can be used by criminals who will attach them to other cars.

The FOP is opposed to eliminating the front license plate. A front license plate is a critical tool for both the public and law enforcement. The anticipated cost savings are far outweighed by the arrests and recovered property made by the use of the front plate. The elimination would strike in half the effectiveness of the automated license plate readers now being used across the State.

On behalf of the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will be happy to address any questions that you may have at this time.