

HB22 should not be passed out of Committee for three reasons: 1) It creates new crimes and enhances penalties at a time when Ohioans in polls and newspaper articles voice support to reduce mass incarceration because of taxpayer burden and inequalities. Common Pleas and Municipal Courts throughout Ohio are implementing criminal legal reform and reducing jail population. This Bill flies in the face of what most Ohioans want or expect from the Legislature.

2) Ohio law enforcement officers are already protected; this Bill is superfluous. It is already a crime to hamper or impede an officer in the performance of his or her official duties. Additionally, if an officer anticipates being in real physical danger, tasers and body armor and more are available. Resisting arrest, assault, and trespass are already crimes.

3) There are better ways to protect law enforcement officers and enhance their relationship with the community than by creating new laws that inadvertently encourage capricious enforcement in the hands of some officers. The Bill criminalizes diverting the officer's attention. What is diverting the officer's attention? The Bill allows a police officer in a tense situation involving Ohioans shouting or crying to arrest everyone--anyone near the officer could divert his attention or could be perceived as "taunting" him. Who knows who threw the object that "struck" him? We know already that people of color have been treated adversely compared to whites in many policing situations; this Bill unnecessarily gives more fuel to that fire. The Bill's vague language allows the officer to cast a wide net in arresting innocent persons, bystanders or even journalists covering the crime scene for obstruction of justice.

This Bill, if enacted, will generate lengthy and expensive lawsuits because it uses vague language, allows for capricious enforcement, and infringes the rights of free assembly and speech. Certainly, your Committee can find better ways to improve relationships in communities throughout Ohio between law enforcement officers and the people they are duty bound to protect. **Please do not pass HB22 out of Committee.**

Thank you for your time.