

Ohio House Committee on State and Local Government
Representative Michael Sheehy
H.B. 11 Sponsor Testimony
March 9, 2022

Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony in support of House Bill 11, which would require the Attorney General to create a law enforcement officer database for hiring eligibility.

In 2015, then-Governor Kasich signed an executive order that created an advisory board to govern standards for Ohio police departments. The Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board has since established minimum standards that police agencies across Ohio can adopt through a certification process in areas such as hiring and training of officers, as well as the use of force. Despite the good work the Advisory Board has done since 2015, there is much more that can be done. According to its 2021 report, 350 law enforcement agencies across the state have not begun the certification process.¹ Even when departments are certified, mistakes can happen. It is our hope that House Bill 11 will help rebuild the trust between law enforcement agencies and the communities they are sworn to serve and protect.

House Bill 11 directs the Attorney General to establish, administer, and operate a database of information regarding law enforcement officers who have been terminated from employment, resigned in lieu of termination, resigned during a departmental investigation, or resigned before a disciplinary hearing within 30 days of the termination or resignation. Further, the bill requires the Attorney General to allow law enforcement agencies to access the database free of charge in order to determine the applicant's eligibility for service with the agency.

The motivation behind this bill is simple. In November 2014, 12-year-old Tamir Rice was shot and killed by a Cleveland police officer, who mistook an airsoft pellet gun for a firearm. Following an investigation, it was found that he had been allowed to resign from his position at the Independence Police Department to avoid being discharged for an "inability to emotionally function."² The City of Cleveland later filed six administrative charges against the officer, which outlined a broader history of emotional instability that went undisclosed on his employment application.³ In July 2021, the Ohio Supreme Court denied an appeal to reinstate the officer to the Cleveland Police Department.⁴ Six years later, we are still seeing that the officers who are involved in these types of shootings are often ones who have been disciplined before. Derek Chauvin had 18 complaints filed against him and was still permitted to serve on the Minneapolis police force.

Members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 11. I will now turn it over to my joint sponsor, Representative Hicks-Hudson.

¹ <https://www.ocjs.ohio.gov/links/Ohio-CollaborativeReport2021.pdf>

² <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/officer-who-killed-tamir-rice-found-unfit-previous-police-job-n261111>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/05/30/cleveland-police-officer-who-fatally-shot-12-year-old-tamir-rice-is-fired/>

⁴ <https://www.wkyc.com/article/news/local/cleveland/ohio-supreme-court-timothy-loehmann-appeal/95-33267a58-8d5f-4cac-83c5-88609d64c0a0>