



OHIO PATROLMEN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

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April 19, 2021

Chair Baldrige, Vice-Chair McClain, Ranking member Sheehy and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, my name is Tom Austin and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (OPBA). I am writing, on behalf of my organization and its 8,000 members, as a proponent for HB206.

The OPBA was involved with the initial concept of authorizing township officers to patrol interstate highways when an injustice occurred several years ago in Lake Township. One of our OPBA members made a stop on an interstate highway for a marked lane violation and discovered the defendant was also in possession of oxycodone and marijuana. The defendant was ultimately convicted of oxycodone possession but that conviction was overturned by the Ohio Supreme Court when the Court determined the township officer did not have authority to make the initial stop on the interstate highway that led to the conviction.

Since that Supreme Court decision, OPBA has been working to eliminate the loophole that allowed the convicted defendant to walk away unpunished. HB206 would eliminate the loophole by allowing township trustees to authorize township police officers to patrol interstate highways. The power granted to townships of at least 5,000 and no more than 50,000 residents is permissive in nature and would require the trustees to authorize the police activity.

Last session a few members in the Ohio Senate were concerned that HB206 (then HB539) could simply be a way for Townships to establish "speed traps" on interstate highways. I want to assure you that the goal of HB206 is not to create speed traps. In fact, many guardrails have been intentionally included in the bill to keep that from ever happening. The goal of HB206 is simply to make sure a seamless law enforcement presence exists on Ohio's interstates.

Unfortunately, the interstates are used for all types of illegal commerce, whether it be drugs or sex trafficking. Townships that have interstates running through their jurisdiction have a duty to keep illegal commerce out of their township.

The OPBA requests this committee favorably report HB206.

Sincerely,

Tom Austin, Executive Director
Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association

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