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Senate Ways and Means Committee

Testimony on Senate Bill 38

February 16, 2021

Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mike Weinman; I am a retired Columbus police officer who now serves as the director of government affairs for the FOP. I am here today to give proponent testimony on Senate Bill 38 on behalf of our 26,000 members. We thank Senator Schaffer for introducing this bill and his continued efforts towards its passage.

Many law enforcement officers across the state protect and serve our communities for wages that do not allow for the purchase of needed protective equipment—which is often expensive. Officers should not have to choose between buying gear that makes our job safer or buying necessities for our families.

The streets have changed as has the equipment needed to perform our job. The devastating opiate scourge requires officers to be equipped with puncture-resistant gloves to prevent needlesticks and masks from preventing fentanyl exposure, just being one example.

Necessary safety equipment also includes more traditional items like ballistic vests—which officers depend upon as we rush toward danger, tourniquets—which we use to stop victims from bleeding out, and reflective gear to warn approaching motorists of hazards. A ballistic vest alone costs \$300 to \$700 (depending on the protection level) and needs to be replaced every five years. This equipment is a significant financial burden on officers, and SB 38 helps our officers with these needed purchases.

The passage of SB 38 will make officers safer and our communities safer.

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