

88th House District
Seneca and Sandusky County



Gary Click
State Representative

Committees
Civil Justice
Infrastructure and Rural
Development
Primary and Secondary Education

Columbus Office
Vern Riffe Center
77 S. High Street
12th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111
(614) 466-1374
Rep88@ohiohouse.gov

Chair Abrams, Vice-Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on HB 429.

The United States has one of the best highway infrastructures in the world. Our highways are a critical factor in our domestic supply chain. Ohio has the fifth largest interstate highway system with more than eight thousand highway lane miles. According to ODOT, that's enough to travel from Los Angeles to Washington, DC three times. We also have the nation's second largest total number of bridges with 27,003!

It goes without saying that such a large infrastructure requires a significant amount of maintenance. That maintenance is performed by the good men and women at ODOT, our county engineers, and contractors across the state who I like to call the salt of the earth, men and women who work for a living. Without them, we have no infrastructure, our economy grinds to a halt, the job market would crumble, and Ohio's families would suffer loss.

It is the men and women wearing the hard hats, reflective vests, carrying the shovels, operating the heavy equipment, and holding up the traffic signs that I stand before you to represent today. The one thing they deserve more than anything else after working a long hard day is to go home. They deserve to go home and embrace their husbands and wives, to hug their kids and tuck them in at night. That doesn't always happen.

Work zone fatalities increased by 61% in 2021 reaching a 17 year high nationwide resulting in over 42,000 injuries and 954 fatalities.¹ That is enough to fill the capacity of a stadium.²

"Highway Maintenance workers died on the job 3.7 times more often than the average American worker & 19 times more often than Engineering & Office/Administrative workers."³

The following statistics were retrieved from the [Ohio State Highway Patrol Work Zone Dashboard](#) on May 13, 2024.⁴ They reflect statistics from 2019 to the present day.

- 25,572 crashes (workers present 35% of the time).
- 90 fatal crashes with 99 deaths.
- On June 1, 2023 there were 30 crashes with a 7 day average of 15.
- On April 10, 2024 there were 19 crashes with a 7 day average of 10.5.

¹ <https://www.workzonebarriers.com/work-zone-crash-facts.html>

² Record attendance at Progressive Field was 45,274 in 1997.

³ <https://www.workzonebarriers.com/work-zone-crash-facts.html>

⁴ <https://statepatrol.ohio.gov/dashboards-statistics/ostats-dashboards/workzone-dashboard/>

- There have been 35,825 citations (40% were for 20mph over the speed limit).
- On May 5, 2023 there were 50 citations issues with an average of 31 per day.
- On May 2, 2024 there were 29 citations issues with an average of 17 per day.

The [Traffic Safety Bulletin](#) reports on Work Zone crashes from 2018-2022.⁵

- There were 25,220 crashes resulting in 9,134 injuries.
- 28% of crashes involved a driver between the ages of 15-24.
- OHSP issued over 40,000 citations (75% for speed violations).
- OHSP issued over 100 citations for speeds in excess of 100 mph.
- 100 individuals were killed.

Morgan Trau reported that 34 ODOT crews have been hit in the first two months of 2024 compared to 56 during all of last year.⁶ A more recent article (April 20) adds nine more for a total of 43.⁷ In a report by Brad Hamilton, Amanda McFarland (ODOT), reveals that 162 ODOT workers have been killed in work zones.⁸

While we cannot eliminate risk, we can reduce it. We cannot prevent every accident but we can lower the numbers through incentives and education. We have the ability to ensure that one more person survives a work zone and that many more Ohio families will finish their day nestled together at home rather than under the hard lights and hard chairs of an emergency waiting room waiting on news regarding their loved ones.

House Bill 429 was brought to me by leaders in the industry who just want to see their colleagues go home at night. It is modelled on legislation from other states with a few revisions. We are in ongoing discussions and are open to improvements. However, as it stands, the bill proposes the following changes:

- Enhanced Education
 - Requires driver education courses to include instruction on the dangers and requirements of operating a motor vehicle in a construction zone.
 - Requires mandatory completion of a safe driving course approved by the Department of Public Safety Director after every offense in a work zone.
- Enhanced Awareness
 - Permits private contractors to install speed monitoring devices and flashing lights to inform and alert motorists as they enter the work zone.
- Enhanced Fines
 - \$400 for the first offence in addition to the fine for the primary offence.

⁵ https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/statepatrol.ohio.gov/links/WorkZone_Bulletin_2023.pdf

⁶ <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2024/03/06/ohio-lawmakers-want-to-increase-fines-in-construction-zones-after-34-odot-workers-struck-so-far-this-year/>

⁷ <https://www.vindy.com/news/local-news/2024/04/road-work-yields-danger-as-construction-season-begins-in-valley/>

⁸ <https://fox8.com/news/want-respect-odot-crews-safety-is-on-the-line/>

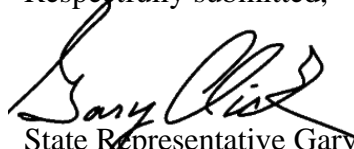


- \$800 for the second offence in addition to the fine for the primary offence.
 - \$1200 for each following offense in addition to the fine for the primary offence.
- Enhanced Penalties
 - 90 day drivers license suspension after the second offense.
 - 1 Year suspension after the third offense.
- Enhanced Reporting & Requirements
 - The offense may be reported by two or more corroborating witnesses, and/or the use of video recorded from a body cam, dash cam, or roadside camera.
 - A worker must actually be present in the work zone for these consequences to be applicable.
 - Signs must be erected, as under current law.

Please allow me to end with this quote from ODOT Highway Technician Jason Barthol.
“I have two kids at home and a wife. My daughter’s 16, my son’s 10. They both depend on me to come home safe. Every night, every worker in every zone has a family that they want to go home to. Each one of those workers has a story.”⁹

Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 429 for your consideration. Representative Johnson and I are happy to take your questions.

Respectfully submitted,


State Representative Gary Click
Ohio House District 88

⁹ <https://www.vindy.com/news/local-news/2024/04/road-work-yields-danger-as-construction-season-begins-in-valley/>