



Representative Jon Cross
Ohio's 83rd House District
HB 536 Sponsor Testimony

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today on HB 536, which makes the failure to wear a seatbelt a primary offense. This grants law enforcement the ability to make a traffic stop for a failure to comply.

As you will hear from my joint sponsor Rep. Miller, the goal of this bill is to save lives. There are an endless amount of statistics that illustrate the wearing a seatbelt saves lives, and Ohio is falling well short in this category. This is not a radical proposal. This would put Ohio seatbelt law in line with other states such as Texas, Florida and Alabama who all count the failure to wear a seatbelt as a primary offense.

The bill has a few key provisions that aim to accomplish this goal. In addition to making the failure to wear a seatbelt a primary offense, it makes the failure to properly secure a child in a booster seat a primary offense. Under current law, law enforcement could spot a child who is actively endanger by being improperly secured in a booster seat and have no recourse to step in and ensure the child is properly restrained.

The goal of this bill is NOT, to increase revenue from traffic tickets, or levy increased punishment on Ohioians. For that reason, the bill makes no changes to the existing fine amounts for seatbelt violations, and creates a occupant restraint safety course for first time offenders to take in lieu of paying the fine. This course is designed by the Department of Public Safety and offered free of charge.

Finally, the bill requires law enforcement agencies to file specified reports to the Attorney General's office who will then file a report with the Governor's office and General Assembly regarding the number of tickets issued in total and by each agency for violations of the seat belt and child booster seat law. This will empower law enforcement, the Executive branch and the General Assembly to make data driven decisions about the safety of Ohioans, as well as provide them with insights about law enforcement that can improve overall performance. I will not be the first or last person to say this in this committee, but let's follow through on our commitment as Republicans and give law enforcement more tools in the toolbox to save lives.

We are not the only ones in the state of Ohio who are looking at seatbelt data. With the cost of just about everything on the rise, a relevant consideration of improving seatbelt compliance in the state is the cost of car insurance. It would stand to reason that Insurance cost would decrease, if there was a considerably decreased risk of loss of life in any given auto collision.

At the end of the day, we can all agree that simply wearing a seatbelt is not an enormous impediment to the freedom or day to day lives of Ohio citizens. It is a very basic activity that is proven, time and again, to save the lives of Ohioians and Ohio's children. While some may argue it is a decision in personal freedom, what about the child in the backseat? Who not only stands to lose their own life because they were not properly restrained, but could also lose a parent who is not properly restrained. What about

your regular everyday law abiding citizen who pays each month for their car insurance, only to pay a higher price because some choose not to wear a seatbelt.

During the crafting of this bill, we heard from the Department of Public Safety, the Buckeye Sheriffs Association, The Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, AAA, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Governor DeWine's office and the Ohio Trucking Association who all expressed support of this bill. This is not a radical proposal, but instead legislation that mirrors legislation in the majority of states, and ends decades of senseless loss of life in the state of Ohio.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today and urge you to support HB 536.