



**Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
Proponent Testimony – House Bill 536
House Criminal Justice Committee**

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, my name is Robert Butler and I am the Chief of Police from Independence, Ohio. I serve on the board of Governors for the Cuyahoga County Chiefs of Police and currently serve as the Vice President of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. I appreciate the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 536 on behalf of OACP.

I am writing in full support of House Bill 536 to make failure to wear a seatbelt in the front seat a primary offense. Seatbelts save lives and I do not believe this is something that can be debated. Under current law, an officer can observe unsafe behavior (a driver not wearing their seatbelt), but are unable to stop that vehicle and correct the behavior before something far worse happens. As a new father, I hope that one day if my son is driving and an officer sees him without a seatbelt, they are able to stop him and correct this unsafe situation.

Officers do not always issue citations during a traffic stop. Allowing officers to stop for a seatbelt infraction can be a teachable moment or a wakeup call for the driver. Good drivers make mistakes, and sometimes those mistakes need to be pointed out so it can be corrected.

Wearing a seatbelt is not a personal choice that only affects the driver. I have personally seen the aftermath when someone "chooses" not to wear a seatbelt, the people affected are the family of the driver, other motorists, the community, and all the first responders that are on a tragic, life-altering scene.

I appreciate the efforts and dedication of Representative Jon Cross and Representative Kevin Miller for introducing this legislation. Again, thank you for the opportunity to share proponent testimony on behalf of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police.