

**Representatives**

Cindy Abrams  
Willis E. Blackshear, Jr.  
Juanita O. Brent  
Sara P. Carruthers  
Rodney Creech  
Steve Demetriou  
Thomas Hall  
Adam C. Miller  
Kevin D. Miller  
Ismail Mohamed



**Chairman**

Haraz N. Ghanbari

**Vice-Chairman**

Phil Plummer

**Ranking Member**

Cecil Thomas

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# HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

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## Meeting Minutes | March 29<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

Chairman Ghanbari called the committee to order at 11:00 am.

Chairman Ghanbari calls HB 84 for its 3<sup>rd</sup> hearing

Chairman Ghanbari introduces Dytania Hudson to give testimony.

Dytania Hudson gives opponent testimony to HB 84. She states the brain is not fully developed until the age of 25 and therefore allowing younger people to become police officers will lead to more police shootings. She states that the State of Ohio needs to invest more money in training the officers we have already.

Representative Brent asks what the state could do to retain officers and what sort of trainings should we add for the police that we have already?

Dytania Hudson responds that the culture needs to change for police officers to make them more involved in their communities and have to live in their communities.

Representative Brent follows up and states that it is now not the law to require police officers to live in their community; however, there is value in having the officers live in their communities.

Dytania Hudson follows up and states the officers should be there longer than their shift and for 18 year olds it will be even more difficult because this would be another challenge they would have to face.

Chairman Ghanbari introduces Emily Cole to give testimony.

Emily Cole gives opponent testimony to HB 84. She states there is data and research that police officers who are older are involved in less shootings. She also states younger officers are more vulnerable to mental challenges, whether it be PTSD, or the 'warrior cop mindset', therefore they are more likely to suffer mentally in the line of duty compared to older officers.

Representative Hall asks where she has received her research from that she is basing these opinions off of.

Emily Cole responds that it came from Buffalo Law review and she will follow up and share this to each member of the Homeland Security Committee.

Representative Hall follows up and asks if these stats are based off of the entire country or Ohio specifically.

Emily Cole states that it is not specific to Ohio.

Representative Hall states these opinions are based off of the opinions of the media and have no base.

Emily Cole follows up and states she is unaware of the media opinion she is stating. She points out that this is only based off of the statistics and numbers that have been made available to her from this report.

Representative Brent asks how we can build better relationships with police officers in the community as well as how to work on officer retention.

Emily Cole responds she believes the best response could be the cadet training and more volunteer service in the community.

Vice Chair Plummer asks if her group has drafted a police reform policy.

Emily Cole responds that they have not drafted a plan for police reform policy.

Vice Chair Plummer follows up and asks if she recognizes this bill is permissive. He additionally states that local governments have a better understanding of what their community will need.

Emily Cole responds she does not intend to tell local communities what the best policy is for them to adopt.

Representative Adam Miller asks what her neighbors and friends have stated and asked about 18 year old officers.

Emily Cole responds that her neighbors and school administrators have been horrified by the idea of 18 year olds with firearms, especially in the schools.

Representative Adam Miller asks if it is the concern of her organization that it would only take one or two instances of this new law being misapplied to have dangerous outcomes.

Emily Cole responds yes; this is a primary concern and the data is clear that younger officers have higher probability to engage in a shooting or excessive force.

Representative Adam Miller follows up and asks for the research report that she is reading from.

Emily Cole responds that she will provide this report by the end of the day.

Chairman Ghanbari calls for Spencer Cahoon to give testimony.

Spencer Cahoon gives opponent testimony on HB 84. He states bringing these 18 year olds into the policing field is not a desire of the leadership in police as it stands today. He then states that the current scientific research states that these 18 year olds do not have fully developed brains that are able to weigh the consequences of their actions. He also states the law already allows for municipalities to hire 18 year olds.

Representative Brent asks why the max age may have been set at 35 year olds for the limit that officers can enter the field.

Spencer Cahoon states he does not have a good answer as he has not done the research on that yet.

Representative Brent follows up and asks how to increase retention for police besides getting rid of the 35 year old age limit.

Spencer Cahoon states the police should be more involved with their communities and part of their time should be used to spend time with people in the community.

Chairman Ghanbari follows up and states that the maximum age limit does not apply to a city in which an ordinance establishes a different maximum age for an original appointment to the police department or to a civil service township in which a resolution adopted by the board of trustees of the township establishes a different maximum age limitation for an original appointment to the police department. Additionally, the General Assembly in the last year raised the age for state troopers to the age of 40. He also states that there are some issues with officers living in these communities that they patrol. This is because these officers have to see the individuals who they may have arrested out in public and this will make it difficult for them to live there. Many officers serve and function successfully in communities that they may not live in.

Vice Chair Plummer states there was a news article stating there was a circumstance in which an 18 year old was able to carry a gun through an independent arbitrator. He then asks for Spencer Cahoon's input.

Spencer Cahoon states that in general 18 year olds are able to carry a gun in other roles already because of concealed carry laws as long as they are an 18 year old and this is already an issue in itself. Therefore, an independent arbitrator would not be breaking the current Ohio law if they chose to carry a gun.

Vice Chair Plummer follows up and states that he was only bringing this up to make a statement about the current law and that 18 year olds are already carrying guns in other official capacities.

Chairman Ghanbari follows up and states you are not able to conceal carry in the state of Ohio if you are under the age of 21.

Spencer Cahoon apologizes.

Chairman Ghanbari follows up and states that the committee is live streamed and wanted to be clear.

Spencer Cahoon follows up and agrees this is an important clarification.

Chairman Ghanbari then recognizes Chief Teresa Theetge to give testimony.

Chief Theetge gives opponent testimony to HB 84. She states she does not believe hiring 18 year olds will be able to fill the large vacancies in the policing field. She states these 18 year olds are not mentally prepared to handle this life or death profession. She also states that there should be more programs that will introduce these youth to the profession without giving them the full responsibilities of an officer.

Ranking Member Thomas asks what Cincinnati's current maximum age limit is.

Chief Theetge states they do not currently have an age limit.

Ranking Member Thomas follows up and asks how starting as an 18 year old cadet can help.

Chief Theetge states this assists in building the pool and bringing and retaining interest to the field for these youth. There is also a public safety academy that allows students to learn about policing in high school.

Ranking Member Thomas follows up and asks about the collaborative agreement in Cincinnati.

Chief Theetge states they have used this agreement to place problem solving at the head of trainings for crime and disorder. Additionally, they try to allow the citizens to solve their own issues by using the police as an arbitrator in arguments and issues. They also work on bias trainings for all officers.

Vice Chair Plummer asks whether the collaborative agreement was a federal mandate or initiative they have taken up on their own.

Chief Theetge states it was an agreement that came from both the federal law enforcement as well as the local police.

Vice Chair Plummer asks about their retention and whether or not they are having success with their numbers.

Chief Theetge states they are currently 100 short but they are working on another class with the budget to support them.

Representative Creech states there are 18 year olds with the maturity of a 30 year old and vice versa. He then asks what she thinks of township police hiring 18 year olds in rural America that rarely ever have to pull their gun.

Chief Theetge states that she has had conversations with 30 other chiefs that they are all concerned that these 18 year olds will still have the same risks as a police department in Cincinnati.

Chairman Ghanbari asks what the differences that she has experienced from when she entered into the police force compared to how it is for new hires today.

Chief Theetge responds that training was more unorganized then and today there are now 700 hours plus of training and in Cincinnati the number is almost doubled. They also now have the collaborative agreement.

Chairman Ghanbari asks if she foresees going back onto the street and getting feedback straight from her officers.

Chief Theetge states that this is something she is already planning to use in her department. She also has an internal advisory board and they will meet quarterly to have open communication.

Representative Brent asks what resources the state can provide to officers.

Chief Theetge states it is mainly regarding funding.

Representative Brent asks what can be done for retention as well.

Chief Theetge states they are looking at keeping them engaged through initiatives for more women to hire more women and work to retain them more. This is due to the fact these women are starting families and therefore they are adapting by giving them retention pay and working with child care facilities.

Representative Abrams asks what the police department in Cincinnati is currently focused on.

Chief Theetge states they are working on more diverse trainings for OPTA courses as well as their own scenario trainings. They also are reserving hour-long blocks to discuss whatever the officers would like to discuss.

Representative Abrams then asks what her vision for the cadet program is for 15-21 year olds.

Chief Theetge states that 15 year olds can start as a cadet as a 15 year old in order to keep them engaged until they are 21. The vision is to create a career path to function as a bridge program.

Ranking member Thomas asks what the geographic recruiting area is.

Chief Theetge states they are hiring from any location that has an interest in working in the Cincinnati Police Department. They are also using referral fees in order for more people to advertise and encourage people to apply. There is also a push for geo-fencing advertising. Lastly, they are also working on funding officers to be provided with their equipment with no cost.

Ranking Member Thomas follows up and asks how many officers are lost through these stages of becoming an officer.

Chief Theetge responds that at every stage they will lose 50 percent.

Ranking Member Thomas follows up and asks if the reason these stages cut off such a large portion is because of the fact that one incident is enough to have detrimental impacts.

Chief Theetge responds yes; this is important and one incident could affect the whole country.

Ranking Member Thomas follows up and asks if there was more funding for small agencies such as the cadet program, would this be a better outcome instead of hiring 18 year olds.

Chief Theetge responds that yes, this will be more valuable.

Ranking Member Thomas asks if there are college credit plus programs that assist in the retention in these programs.

Chief Theetge states yes; there are courses that could qualify them with credit for college.

Chairman Ghanbari calls for Mike Weinman from the Fraternal of Police for testimony.

Mike Weinman gives opponent testimony for HB 84. He states the calls that officers will respond to will greatly affect 18 year olds. Due to their brain still being considered adolescent, they will be deeply impacted by the traumatic events that they will inevitably be called to.

Representative Brent asks what is best for retention of the officers.

Mike Weinman responds the narrative needs to change and the police force has been painted with a broad brush by activists groups and this is whether the change must begin. He also states many police forces are in need of more funding for their programs in small communities.

Ranking Member Thomas then asks how old he was when he entered the police force.

Mike Weinman responds that he served in the military first.

Ranking member Thomas states that there are many unique differences between serving in the military compared to serving as an officer.

Mike Weinmen responds he had to realize how different and difficult it was to begin serving as an officer even when he was already 25 when he began serving.

Ranking Member Thomas states the small agencies need the resources and this would be the correct solution to the issue this bill is trying to solve.

Representative Demetriou thanks Mike Weinmen and all of the other witnesses for coming out and testifying.

Mike Weinmen thanks Representative Demetriou for the accommodations he has made as a joint-sponsor of the bill.

Chairman Ghanbari asks what sort of changes might there be if the age was changed to 20 or 19.

Mike Weinmen responds he is unsure if this would change the recruitment.

Ranking Member Thomas follows up and reiterates raising the age limit may be a better solution.

Mike Weinmen states this would be valuable as well to retention if you include more resources.

Chairman Ghanbari adjourns committee at 12:33pm.

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Chairman Ghanbari

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Ranking Member Thomas