

3-29-23 House Homeland Security Committee

Chairman Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the House Homeland Security Committee-thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 84.

My name is Teresa Theetge and I have 33 years of law enforcement experience with the Cincinnati Police Department, during which time I rose from the rank of Police Officer to Police Chief. I am a second generation CPD officer, and my family now has a third generation in this noble profession.

I attained my Bachelors and Masters degrees from Xavier University. I have completed numerous law enforcement leadership schools and advanced executive courses.

I am honored to say I am a life-long resident of Cincinnati and take pride in leading an organization of 1000 amazing men and women who serve approximately 300,000 diverse residents.

As I am sure you are aware, law enforcement agencies across our country are currently struggling to recruit qualified candidates, and Cincinnati is no different. However, I do not believe that a plausible solution to this situation is to lower the age of a sworn law enforcement officer in the State of Ohio from 21 years of age to 18 years of age. I do not think an 18-year-old has the emotional or mental capacity to make the critical, split-second, life or death decisions that officers must make during the course of carrying out their duties. As a mother of four adult children, one of whom is in law enforcement, I can tell you that at 18 years of age, none of them possessed the necessary capacity to join this profession.

In Cincinnati, we have a document, the Collaborative Agreement, that guides us on policing our city. We have worked extremely hard over the last 20 years to partner with our community to be a model for how police and community can partner to become a Gold Standard. I would never want to do anything that would jeopardize that partnership, including hiring 18 year olds, whose lack of life-experiences could hinder their ability to make good decisions when policing our communities.

What law enforcement agencies do need are resources to provide career pathway opportunities, such as internships, for 18 to 21 year olds who have an

interest in becoming a police officer. In Cincinnati, we are currently working toward implementing a program such as this.

In closing, I'd like to stress my position that hiring 18 year olds as sworn police officers would create a greater risk to our communities than a reward.

Thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony today and I would be happy to stand for questions.