

June 12, 2023

Ohio House of Representatives  
Homeland Security Committee  
Honorable Chair Haraz N. Ghanbari

Re: Proponent Testimony for H.B. 167

Honorable Chair Ghanbari and Members of the Homeland Security Committee,

My name is Michael Harnishfeger, retiring Chief of Police from Ada, Ohio and past president of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police.

During the years of 2010 through 2017 our organization worked diligently with the Ohio Legislature to propose a 40-hour training course for any newly appointed chief of police. We believed that it was imperative for Ohio's chiefs of police to have a core set of training in order to prepare them for the critically important task of leading an Ohio police agency.

In 2017 our efforts resulted in Ohio Revised Code, Section 109.804, mandating every newly appointed police chief to take a 40-hour training.

Since then, the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy in concert with subject matter experts, consisting of attorney's, Ohio Ethics Professionals and Ohio Chiefs of Police have conducted this training to hundreds of police chiefs from all corners of Ohio. The training has been well received and extremely valuable to chiefs leading one-person departments to hundreds of officers within Ohio's 950 plus agencies.

For the past couple of years, having gained experience in facilitating and conducting the course, together with staff of the Ohio Peace Officers Training Academy and members of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, we believe several very minor modifications are needed in the current law and thus we are proponents for H.B. 167 as sponsored by Rep. Miranda and Rep. Abrams.

We believe the change from in Section A "conduct the course at the Ohio peace officer training academy" to "locations determined by the commission" allows us the ability to conduct the training at more conducive facilities that allow better networking by attendees and further allows the commission to move the course as needed.

We believe that clarifying "a portion" of the forty-hour course in Section B, to "eight hours" of equivalency exemption takes out any subjective view of the number of hours and clarifies to the attendee, exactly the number of hours he or she may be exempted from. Further, the timeline to request the exemption from "ten calendar days following the person's appointment" to "fourteen calendar days before the beginning of the course" gives much more time in most cases for the new chief to request the exemption. In many cases, a newly appointed chief is not aware of the requirement until 10 days of his or her appointment has passed.

Finally, we believe that the language in Section E should be defined better. Instead of “did not hold office” to “has never held the full-time position” of chief of police before the person was appointed chief of police makes clear who must take the course.

In all, this proposed legislation simply clarifies current law and does not change the intent of the law in any way. Our intent, which has proven extremely effective, is to prepare newly appointed chiefs of police to guide their agency with a core set of very important Ohio specific technical information and most importantly, leadership concepts.

I thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony. I would have rather provided this in person, but my schedule and short notice did not allow this to happen.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Harnishfeger, CLEE  
Chief of Police  
Ada, Ohio

Past President, Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police 2011 -2013