



Representative Thomas F. Patton

H.B. 416 – House Homeland Security Committee

Sponsor Testimony

April 24, 2024

Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 416. This bill would create a licensure for traffic camera dealers who wish to operate and issue speeding tickets in Ohio.

Unlike similar bills this legislature has seen in the past, this bill specifically addresses the traffic camera dealers who wish to operate traffic cameras for profit in Ohio. Currently, the State of Ohio does not have any oversight of the traffic cameras that enforce Ohio laws. In fact, the only information we were provided as to the quantity, location, and manufacturers of these cameras was the information provided voluntarily by a handful of municipalities, combined with mandatory tax filings from the Ohio Department of Taxation. Of those we were able to identify, the companies that operate these cameras are headquartered in Arizona (*Verra Mobility*), Georgia (*DragonEye Technology*), Tennessee (*Blue Line Solutions*), Sweden (*Sensys Gatso*), and Germany (*Jenoptik*). Note that none of the companies reported by local municipalities are headquartered in Ohio.

According to reports by the Ohio Department of Taxation, traffic cameras have collected \$67.6 million in fines from Ohio motorists in Fiscal Years 2020-2023. Of that \$67.6 million, \$33.3 million came from speed cameras in Cuyahoga County alone. We have learned from city leadership and the traffic camera dealers themselves that the traffic camera dealers are receiving between 30% and 40% of the gross receipts from these fines. This means the out-of-state traffic camera dealers have taken between \$20.3 million and \$27 million from Ohio motorists in FY 2020-2023. This number continues to climb each year these cameras are allowed to operate with virtually zero state oversight.

We know of at least 59 camera locations throughout the state, of which 30 are in school zones and 29 are in non-school zones. Despite a nearly 50-50 split, the cameras in non-school zones account for 82% of the fine revenue, or \$55.3 million of the \$67.6 million in FY 2020-2023. We believe this is because school zones are clearly marked with flashing lights and high traffic volume, leading to fewer overall violators. Contrast this with non-school zones that have irregular speed limits designed to trap drivers in often remote stretches of road. We have had conversations with interested parties about exempting cameras in school zones from the licensure

and calibration fees as they are already exempt from paying advance legal fees under R.C. 4511.099(B).

This bill creates a licensure for traffic camera dealers, for which they must pay \$100,000 annually per camera to the Department of Commerce. This bill also requires monthly calibration of these cameras by the Ohio Department of Public Safety to ensure they can accurately report a driver's speed. This comes at a \$5,000 monthly cost per camera. These fines cover the cost of equipment, staff, and transportation needed for the Dept. of Public Safety to calibrate each camera in the state. These fees would fund the state's operations are dwarfed by the millions in fines collected by these cameras annually. Finally, this bill seeks to tax the revenues received by these traffic cameras at 8%, which would fund PTSD treatment for our first responders.

Opponents of this bill may suggest that speed cameras improve safety when there is no compelling evidence to support this. In fact, the handful of municipalities operating these cameras across the state rely on speeding violations and make no attempt to intervene. Simply stationing a police officer in a cruiser would be a visual deterrent to speeding and would allow the officer to intervene by pulling over speeding drivers and issuing tickets. Issuing tickets weeks after the violation does not improve safety, and it provides no opportunity to intervene the speeding driver's behavior. This is nothing more than a revenue generator for a handful of municipalities and out-of-state companies at the expense of thousands of Ohio drivers. We are attempting to reroute this revenue back to Ohio.

Thank you once more, Chair Ghanbari and the members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. I now welcome any questions from the committee.