

**OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE MEETING
DATE: JUNE 5, 2024**

**PROPONENT TESTIMONY OF JOYCE CHAMBERS REICHARD, ESQ.
HOUSE BILL 473**

Chair Ghanbari, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Ohio House of Representative's Homeland Security Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important legislation.

My name is Joyce Chambers Reichard. I was born and raised in Ohio, am a current resident of the city of North Ridgeville, and a Plaintiff's trial lawyer in Cleveland. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 473.

My family and I were impacted by the absence of cameras at Ohio's Rest Areas. My late husband Scott fell victim to violence that took place at the Rest Area located in Bath Township. Scott was traveling home late one Friday evening in August 2018 when he pulled off I-77 North and was seen getting/checking something on the passenger side of his work truck. According to investigators, Scott was struck at least three times by a man traveling with friends from Upstate New York. Investigators determined that the man and his friends were returning to their home state of New York when the driver needed to pull over to get sleep before they continued home. The man who struck Scott had reportedly been heavily drinking the entire day and shortly after Scott's arrival at the Rest Area, this man thought Scott yelled out to him which he told Officers made him feel that Scott should be taught a lesson for doing so. Investigators determined that Scott was had only been at this Rest Area for approximately 10 minutes or less before this man struck Scott from behind, knocking him to the ground. This man then proceeded to steal Scott's work vehicle to which he later gave a statement indicating that he began to panic because Scott fell to the ground and began convulsing, so he jumped into Scott's work truck with the intent to flee the scene and avoid arrest, while in the process of doing so, running over Scott who was lying on the pavement – ultimately causing his demise. My family later

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learned that Scott pulled into this Rest Area around 11 pm, 911 was called at 11:06 pm, and at 11:32 pm, Scott was pronounced at the scene. Scott was at the Rest Area for less than 6 minutes when this man took his life.

According to investigators, only a few people were at the Rest Area that evening, and not one saw the entire incident. Officers, after many hours – 19 to be exact – investigated and questioned every witness in this Rest Area. My family and I were notified around 1 a.m. the following morning, having to wake up to that knock on the door from local Police Officers that we all have nightmares of and were left dealing with this tragic loss, trying to piece together any possible understanding of why this happened, and trying to protect ourselves because this man also had Scott’s personal belongings including his house keys and wallet. We later learned that prior to the assault on Scott, the suspect had been harassing people coming and going from the bathrooms and the distance between the bench where the suspect stated he was seated to where Scott’s work truck was parked, was significant, leaving the likelihood of Scott yelling out to this man or even being aware of his existence, highly unlikely. All of which made the suspect’s story simply implausible. What shocked my family and friends the most was that there was not a single working camera in this Rest Area.

After hours of investigation, Ohio State Highway Patrol Criminal Investigation Unit Officers located the sleeping driver of the car the suspect had been traveling with, questioned this individual (among others) and obtained the suspect’s contact information and a current photograph. This information led to the issuance of a “be on the lookout” or “BOLO” across all news networks within the states of Ohio and New York. With the use of the suspect’s description and his cell number, Officers were able to later ping the

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suspect's phone from a cell tower, which ultimately led to his arrest near Cambridge, Ohio. While my family was relieved that the suspect was finally in custody, his arrest did not take away from the traumatic and emotionally challenging time we were experiencing. What continues to upset me about the suspect was even after his arrest, there was no remorse for the life he had taken, and he demonstrated absolutely no respect for the law. In fact, the suspect's intentions were made clear during his statement to Officers after his arrest when he told the Trooper his plan was to run from the law as he had done in the past. Signifying that this man had a continued disregard for others and the law, and this was not the first time he had done something to hurt another human being. This, among many other reasons, is why I support House Bill 473 and why cameras should be placed at every Ohio Rest Area.

Scott was 42 years young the day his life was abruptly taken. He was a law-abiding man and described by many as profoundly moral, steadfast, and loyal. All who knew him would say he was among the most honest people they'd ever encountered, and without exception he thought of others before himself. Unfortunately, people like the man who took Scott's life, are increasingly becoming more and more prevalent in the world in which we live. Scott left behind a son who was only 25 at the time who will never be able to share those defining moments in his life with his best friend. I, Scott's wife, was also left without the person who I had known and loved since high school. There is No one who could ever replace the void that my family has suffered because of this preventable tragedy.

The events of August 17, 2018, could have easily been prevented by something as simple as a camera at this Rest Area. A camera may have deterred this suspect from committing a heinous crime. Or, at the very least, video footage of the actual events that

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night may have shown the suspect's true intentions, making the difference between a life sentence that this man truly deserves vs. the 30-year prison sentence he is serving.

In August, it will be six years since Scott's passing. While the man who killed him may be behind bars, and the investigation is considered closed, my family remains without many answers regarding why and exactly how the events of that night transpired. Truthfully, we will probably never know. However, by passing House Bill 473, we can help prevent these and similar events from taking place and can provide families like mine with answers. The right thing to do is to pass House Bill 473 and make sure that every Ohio Rest Area is safe for its travelers by adding cameras.

Ultimately, the residents of this state should feel comfortable pulling into a Rest Area. Situations such as the one I've described here today, or that my dear friend Carolyn has testified to, can possibly be prevented with these simple deterrents offered by the installation and monitoring of cameras proposed by this legislation. These cameras just might save a life or, at the very least, provide a family like mine with closure.

Thank you to the sponsors and co-sponsors for your leadership on this important bill and thank you to this Committee for your time in allowing me to testify and share Scott's story.

I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.