



Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
House Bill 56 – Proponent Written Testimony
Senate Judiciary Committee

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 56.

My name is Heinz von Eckartsberg. I am currently the chair of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) Legislative Committee and the retired Chief of Police in Dublin, Ohio. I was also, most recently the assistant superintendent of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation. I am writing on behalf of our OACP members.

We continue to support the efforts of the sponsors of this bill to provide much-needed tools for Ohio law enforcement to combat the growing problem of street racing and street takeovers in our state.

Across our country over the last several years, the problem of street takeovers and street racing has reached a new high. In cities like Columbus, Dayton, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, as well as other cities across the US, trying to deal with these events has taxed the resources of law enforcement to their limits. Unfortunately, these incidents have also resulted in numerous injuries and even fatalities at times.

As written, this legislation more clearly defines the actions of drivers and spectators involved in “stunt driving, street racing, and street takeovers,” and describes some of the actions that have made these irresponsible gatherings so dangerous to the general public. This new legislation will help law enforcement crack down on these incidents and hold participants accountable, including the spectators who are complicit in closing and blocking public streets for these events.

In addition, HB 56 provides stricter penalties to those who choose to put other’s lives in danger by fleeing police in a motor vehicle, as well as stricter legislative guidance to police agencies for providing safe and responsible pursuit policies to their staffs. According to information published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) more than one person every day in the US loses their life during a police pursuit (525 in 2021 and 545 in 2020). According to data from Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS), from 2009 to 2023 over 21% of those who lost their lives as a result of a police pursuit were not involved in the pursuit.¹ Clearly, leading the police on a motor vehicle pursuit is irresponsible and dangerous. It puts the lives of officers, suspects and innocent bystanders in jeopardy. It is still, however, a

vital tool for law enforcement when other means of apprehension are impossible or inappropriate. This legislation will help to encourage some to think twice before committing this crime in the future.

As I mentioned earlier, this issue is not unique to our state. All over the country law enforcement has been tasked with trying to stop the popular practices of street racing, street takeovers and stunt driving. This legislation will provide a standard level of accountability statewide for law enforcement to use, rather than different laws and ordinances in every jurisdiction, as is currently the case.

The Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police urges you to support our communities and Ohio law enforcement by supporting Ohio House Bill 56.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share written testimony. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience if you have any questions or concerns that we can address.

¹Information retrieved from the Police Executive Research Forum website. <https://www.policeforum.org/trending23sep23>