

December 23, 2024

The Honorable Mike DeWine  
Governor, State of Ohio  
77 South High Street, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

We, the undersigned, respectfully request your line item veto of a particular portion of House Bill 315. This language unnecessarily restricts transparency regarding state and local policing by dramatically altering Ohio's public records laws. More specifically, the language and provisions for which we request your veto include, but are not entirely limited to, the portion that:

- Allows state and local government to charge public records requestors the "actual cost" of retrieving, downloading, reviewing, redacting, seeking legal advice regarding, and producing any and all video records;
- When determining actual cost, allows law enforcement to charge up to \$75 per hour of video produced to requestors, with a cap of \$750 total per video;
- Permits state and local law enforcement to require payment of the estimated costs detailed above before starting the process of producing a video or videos. Additional costs beyond what are estimated may be charged to requestors before a video or videos are produced as long as those costs do not exceed 20% of the originally quoted estimated cost;

In addition, this language was amended into HB 315 at the very end of the legislative session with zero notice to the public. As a result, Ohioans had no opportunity to air concerns, to discuss these changes with lawmakers and other stakeholders, or to formally appear as witnesses before a committee(s), as would happen during the normal legislative process.

The undersigned, and many others, are concerned about these restrictions that will further hide crucial information behind a payment scheme many cannot afford. This will discourage and prevent people, organizations, and news media from pursuing important information about such events as police shootings, arrests and other encounters with the public, and other information we have the fundamental right to know about our government and law enforcement.

Transparency is especially important when it comes to policing given law enforcement has broad authority to stop, detain, question, arrest, and commit violence against citizens in and throughout Ohio. But, with these changes, underfunded news media, and many members of the public, will be prevented from thoroughly investigating police shootings where law enforcement members were utilizing body and dashboard cameras.

Advocacy groups and organizations will be financially unable to examine police practices as they pursue reforms at the local and state levels. And, in worst case scenarios, family members and friends searching for answers and more information about a shooting and/or or killing of their loved one will first have to pay hundreds of dollars before they can receive answers, assuming they can ever afford to pay the costs of these records.

Throughout your terms as governor of Ohio, we know and appreciate you have expressed genuine concern about, and sought and accomplished changes to, policing in Ohio. We sincerely hope you will agree that, at a minimum, such radical changes to Ohio's public records laws should be discussed and debated via the typical legislative process.

Your veto will still allow legislators, if they wish, to pursue these changes but instead with an open, deliberative, and cooperative process. This would allow Ohioans to properly express their opinions and concerns without such sudden and secretive changes with huge impacts on policing and the public's right to know.

We thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this veto request.

Abortion Forward

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio

Bexley Coalition for Equitable Policing

Common Cause Ohio

Convergent Strategies, LLC

Dayton Anti-Racist Network

Law Office of Spencer J. Cahoon

Matter News

National Police Accountability Project

Ohio Fair Courts Alliance

Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and Change (OFUPAC)

Ohio Families Unite Against Police Brutality

Ohio NAACP

People's Justice Project

Policy Matters Ohio

SOAR 431 Foundation

The Chandra Law Firm LLC

The Freedom BLOC

The Wren Collective