



Testimony in Opposition to HB 69

Susan J. Cave, Executive Director, Ohio Municipal League

April 23, 2013

Good Afternoon Chairman Damschroder, Ranking Member Mallory and members of the House Transportation, Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee. My name is Susan Cave; I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Municipal League. I am here today to express the League's opposition to HB 69.

A number of the municipalities in Ohio utilize safety cameras (red light and speed photo monitoring devices) to make our streets safer. The OML supports them in this effort. You have heard from other witnesses today that preceded me that in Ohio and across the country, safety cameras have been proven to deter reckless driving, reduce crashes and save lives. Law enforcement and city leaders should have the ability to use photo enforcement technology as a tool to improve public safety. If passed House Bill 69 would strip this right from Ohio municipal corporations, putting drivers and pedestrians both residents and non-residents who use the streets at risk.

You have or will hear from cities that have experienced significant improvements in street safety. In Columbus, there was a 74% reduction in right-angle crashes and a 25% reduction in rear-end crashes since the city started using cameras. Springfield saw a 47% reduction in crashes after cameras were installed. Safety cameras in Toledo led to a 39% reduction in fatal red light running crashes and there was a 35% reduction in red light running crashes in Dayton after camera were installed. The numbers tell the story- these cameras make a difference.

Some oppose safety cameras because they consider them to be revenue generators. We support safety cameras as tools for our municipalities. We do not believe they should be used purely for revenue. Cameras modify driver behavior and make our cities safer. We believe cities should have the opportunity to choose whether safety cameras are right for them and their residents.

Issuing tickets by police on the scene could also be considered a revenue generator. However, it is also not necessarily the most cost effective use of safety forces. This is especially true at a time when local revenues have already been sharply reduced by the state.

Municipalities have a choice when it comes to implementing the use of red light or speed monitoring devices. It is a matter of local control both with the city government and the residents of the community. Local voters can say “no” to such safety enforcement plans by the use of referendum and initiative. Prior court decisions both Ohio and federal have upheld the use.

Most municipalities that implement the use of such devices enter into a contract with a provider of the cameras and service. HB 69 is an outright ban of the use of such devices. The question needs to be answered as to how this ban impacts those existing contracts. Would such legislation be an unconstitutional impairment of these existing red light or speed camera contracts under the federal and Ohio contracts clauses on the basis it would impair legally made contracts without a sufficient health and safety justification?

Rather than a ban, would it not be a better solution to work with cities and other interested parties to provide more guidance in statute on the use of such devices while recognizing that this is clearly a local control issue?

I will be available to answer your questions.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our view on HB 69.