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Sunset Review Committee
March 1, 2016 – 3:30 p.m.
Ohio Department of Public Safety Testimony

Chair Jordan and Members of the Sunset Review Committee:

My name is Joe Montgomery, and I am the assistant director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety. Thank you for the invitation to be here this afternoon.

In my brief remarks, I want to explain why it is in the best interests of Ohioans to maintain the current Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee, Homeland Security Advisory Council and the Ohio Private Investigation and Security Services Commission. In each instance, the safety of Ohioans is assured through these entities, and the quality of life in our state is enhanced through the important work being done.

Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee

Beginning with the Ohio AMBER Alert program, in August 2002 then-Governor Bob Taft issued an executive order that created a task force for the development of the AMBER plan.

Ohio's first actual AMBER Alert occurred in October 2002. Since that time, Ohio has issued 181 AMBER Alerts, which involved 207 children, with 201 being safely recovered. Unfortunately, the remaining six children were found deceased.

In January 2003, legislation officially created the Ohio AMBER program and led to the appointment of the Ohio AMBER Alert Steering Committee in July of that year. That committee is now known as the Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee.

The committee is tasked with advising the governor, attorney general, Ohio Department of Public Safety director and law enforcement agencies on an ongoing basis on the implementation, operation, improvement and evaluation of the statewide emergency alert program.

Oversight from the Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee guarantees the continued coordination among programs, program growth and ongoing training.

Since Ohio's first AMBER Alert in 2002 – due to the large success of the program – additional categories of alerts have been added.

And the value of sustaining this program, in its entirety, is clearly evident through that expansion I just mentioned.

The first new category added was the Endangered Missing Child Alerts, which began in January 2006. Since that category was established, Ohio has issued 117 of those alerts, which involved 121 children, with 119 being safely recovered and two found deceased.

But the value of this system extends beyond children. Ohio next added the Endangered Missing Adult Alerts in 2008. Since that time there have been 1,018 of those alerts which involved 1,042 adults, with 986 being safely recovered, 52 found deceased and four still missing.

And finally, Ohio has issued one Blue Alert since that category was added in 2012. The Blue Alert program enlists the public's assistance in the event of an incident involving a critically injured or killed law enforcement officer. In that one case from 2012, the suspect was apprehended.

Members of the Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee serve without compensation. Statute dictates they meet periodically – Operationally, they meet quarterly. A total of 12 staff hours are devoted to each meeting.

There is also an annual AMBER Alert conference, for which 120 staff hours are devoted. The total staff hours including both the quarterly meetings and annual conference is 168 hours annually.

Members serve two-year terms. We recommend that going forward the appointment terms be lengthened to three-year terms, and those terms be staggered in groups of three each year for the 12-member Committee.

Homeland Security Advisory Council

Moving on to the Homeland Security Advisory Council, which was established by the 126th General Assembly to advise the Ohio Department of Public Safety director on homeland security matters. This responsibility includes reviewing, commenting on, and approving the Ohio Homeland Security Strategic Plan, which includes cyber security strategies.

The Council's responsibilities also include evaluations of U.S. Department of Homeland Security grant investment justifications, portions of Ohio's Threat, Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment report and portions of Ohio's State Preparedness Report.

The forum created by the Homeland Security Advisory Council allows the Ohio Department of Public Safety director to hear input from a variety of stakeholders. This enables the director to make informed decisions and be more aware of issues relating to homeland security. The Council encourages collaboration between federal, state and local government agencies, as well as non-profits that are essential in preparing for, preventing, mitigating, responding to and recovering from acts of terrorism.

It should also be noted, federal homeland security grant guidance, as set forth by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, requires the state has a Senior Advisory Committee. Ohio uses the Homeland Security Advisory Council to fulfill this requirement in several important ways.

First, the Homeland Security Advisory Council allows us to integrate preparedness activities across disciplines, including the private sector, non-profits, faith-based and community organizations. It also incorporates all levels of government including local, state, Tribal and territorial, with the goal of maximizing coordination and reducing the duplication of effort.

Next, the Council allows us to create a cohesive planning network that builds and implements preparedness initiatives using resources from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency

Management Agency. These resources also include those from other federal, state, territorial, local, private sector and faith-based organizations.

Another way the Homeland Security Advisory Council fulfills the federal requirement is it provides management of all available preparedness funding sources to ensure their effective use, while also minimizing the duplication of efforts.

And the final way the Homeland Security Advisory Council provides value in guaranteeing compliance with federal standards is it ensures applications and funds from the State Homeland Security Program and Urban Area Security Initiative align with the capability gaps identified in the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, and the State Preparedness Report.

Members of the Homeland Security Advisory Council are selected by the Ohio Department of Public Safety director and serve without compensation.

There is no mention in statute about the frequency of meetings – Operationally, the Ohio Department of Public Safety director convenes the Homeland Security Advisory Council when needed. A total of 112 staff hours are devoted annually to meetings of this Council.

Ohio Private Investigation and Security Services Commission

The last entity I want to briefly talk about this afternoon is the Ohio Private Investigation and Security Services Commission. This Commission was established during the 129th General Assembly to advise the Ohio Department of Public Safety director on all matters related to the regulation of private investigation and the business of security services.

The Commission also advises the director on the format, content and all other aspects of private investigation and security services licensure examinations.

Statute requires quarterly meetings of the Ohio Private Investigation and Security Services Commission. Members are not compensated, rather they are reimbursed for actual travel expenses. A total of 24 staff hours are devoted annually for Commission meetings.

After months of collaboration, the Commission unanimously endorsed a legislative overhaul to streamline licensing, enhance training and bolster safeguards for the public. Senate Bill 183, which was introduced in June 2015, subsequently provided the first major rewrite of the statute in 30 years.

The Commission worked closely with staff from the Ohio Department of Public Safety's Private Investigator Security Guard Services in developing the language for Senate Bill 183. The bill restructures our existing procedures to license security guards and private investigators, along with their employers or companies. I would also add that Senate Bill 183 is pro-business and would make our operations more efficient.

In Closing

Chair Jordan and Members of the Sunset Review Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. On behalf of Ohio Department of Public Safety Director John Born, we recommend reauthorization of the Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee, Homeland Security Advisory Council and the Ohio Private Investigation and Security Services Commission. Hopefully, you now have a better understanding of the important public value provided by each of these three entities as they coordinate both life-saving, and quality of life improving, activities in Ohio.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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