

## **Joseph A. Fitzgerald – Delaware County Fraternal Order of Police**

Good evening. Thank you for inviting me to speak regarding the proposed ordinance.

The Delaware County Law Enforcement community is dedicated to the protection of our community and the proper enforcement of laws, both criminal and civil, that fall within the scope of our responsibility.

The demands placed upon our members are great and the resources of our Departments are often stretched thin to meet those demands.

Reasonable efforts to streamline the processes that are involved in that mission are certainly welcomed.

The Ordinance under consideration will allow for a more efficient way that Officers can contend with the offenses addressed by it.

An encounter with a citizen who is formally arrested for those activities can consume a substantial amount of an Officer's time, which can include the transportation and lodging of the person, the time-consuming process of

fingerprinting and photographing, and the preparation of a Criminal Complaint and related reports and other paperwork.

If instead, the Officer could merely issue a Citation for the particular offenses, the encounter should last approximately as long as a traffic stop. That will free up the Officer to attend the other important activities and services.

In addition, when an Officer is tied up conducting a formal arrest, their ability to respond to emergency calls is hampered, as they may be at the station and distant from their normal patrol sector – as well, they would need to secure the person under arrest while they respond to a call, thus extending the amount of time an individual would be in police custody for a relatively minor offense. Here in our county, some departments have fewer than 12 officers. Many departments have 2 officers working a shift and sometimes a single officer may be covering a shift. That officer could now be tied up for hours completing the arrest.

Finally, if the situation is handled as a civil offense, the number of court proceedings will almost certainly be reduced, thus requiring less time spent by Officers attending multiple hearings regarding such charges.

In conclusion, the law enforcement community of Delaware County looks forward to working with our District Attorney and all government agencies that seek to support our efforts to protect and serve those who live and visit our County.

Thank you.