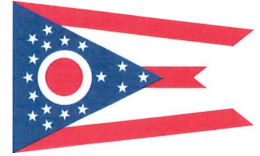




FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE OF OHIO, INC.

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January 14, 2021

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

Dear Governor DeWine,

Over the last few weeks we've heard from FOP members across Ohio about the impact of COVID-19 on police. The stories make it clear that police must be considered as the first responders that they are and receive priority access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Since emergency responders and firefighters have already gained access to the vaccine, let us be clear: police are second only to emergency medical providers in answering calls involving acute emergencies. Police are often first on the scene and must perform life-saving procedures that put them in contact with citizens without the privilege, or in some cases even the ability, to worry about whether or not the people are sick. Our jobs regularly put us in contact with people where it is difficult to social distance and, in the instance of answering a call at someone's house, it's not natural for residents to wear masks.

The problem is immense and absent a vaccine, there's little hope on the horizon for police. In Cleveland, Police Chief Calvin Williams reported to city council that staffing is down and, "A lot of it has to do with COVID-19." 150-160 officers a week have been out due to COVID-19 or quarantine.

In Columbus, reports indicate a 33 percent positivity rate and dozens, if not hundreds, of officers quarantined. One police officer wrote us and I include an excerpt here because I believe it really highlights what patrol-level officers are facing.

*My issue is that police have not had the option to stay home through this pandemic. Due to the nature of our job, we encounter many people every day. Many people who we cannot distance from and many who are not*

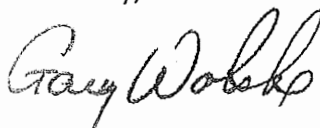
*wearing masks. We respond to types of calls that require us to break the social distance barrier. We are forced to enter people's homes when investigating calls for domestic violence or domestic disputes. Close personal contact is hard to avoid within a person's home or apartment and most people do not wear masks within their own home which increases our exposure risk.*

*I would like to stress my concern as someone who has had Covid and who was absent from work for three weeks while my coworkers had to pick up the slack in my absence. Due to the physical nature of our job, I think it is imperative that we do what we can to prevent and protect the health of the police. In doing so, we protect the health of the community.*

FOP leaders and our members have appreciated a good relationship with your office and the Department of Public Safety during the last ten months as we have navigated a wide array of new challenges to law enforcement and efforts to keep our communities safe.

COVID-19 is in our ranks. It's decimating our ranks. This new challenge requires bold action. We understand the challenges to vaccine rollout. We understand that you have a number of constituent groups that deserve priority attention as you distribute the vaccine. We simply demand that our integral role in the community be recognized and the importance of offering immunization to law enforcement as first responders and that we be given top priority.

Sincerely,



Gary Wolske  
President