



December 12, 2017

Ohio House of Representatives
Criminal Justice Committee
Support for H.B. 276

Chair Manning and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

On behalf of American Municipal Power (AMP), the Ohio Municipal Electric Associations (OMEA) and our member owners and communities we are writing to offer our support for HB 276.

AMP is the Columbus-based non-profit wholesale power supplier and services provider for 135 members in nine states. These member utilities combined serve more than 650,000 customers. AMP offers member municipal electric systems the benefits of scale and expertise in providing and managing energy services. AMP is governed by a 21-member Board of Trustees made up of officials from across the AMP footprint. The OMEA was formed in 1962 and represents the state and federal legislative interests of AMP and 80 Ohio municipal electric systems. The OMEA is governed by a 16-member Board of Directors made of officials from across Ohio, including 12 mayors.

HB 276 seeks to protect utility workers serving the front lines of our nation’s critical infrastructure and face a dangerous work environment in order to sustain our modern society. Specifically, HB 276 enhances the penalty for aggravated menacing from a first degree misdemeanor to a fourth degree felony when the victim is a utility worker that is engaged in the performance of their duties and the offender threatens the victim with a deadly weapon intending to obstruct the operation of a utility.

Utility workers are often in direct contact with the public and have one of the most dangerous and unrecognized jobs there is today. In particular, electrical line workers often confront inclement weather, energized lines that are down, fire hazards, national security threats, and all manner of unfriendly circumstances associated with the disconnection of service for non-payment. All of these risks can impair safe operations of the grid but most are unavoidable. Protecting utility workers from needless attacks and threats of violence should be a priority.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue and urge your favorable consideration of H.B. 276.

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