



# Ohio Collaborative Community- Police Advisory Board

September 8, 2021 Meeting Summary

The Ohio Collaborative Community Police Advisory Board (Collaborative) is a multidisciplinary group consisting of a diverse group of Ohioans including law enforcement, community members, elected officials, academia and the faith based community. The Collaborative was created by executive order 2015-04k on April 29, 2015, after the Governor's Task Force on Community Police Relations completed its work and produced a report with recommendations on how to improve the important relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

The Collaborative is chaired by Assistant Director Karen Huey, Department of Public Safety. Members appointed by the Governor DeWine, including ex officio members, are identified below:

- Commissioner Lori Barreras— Chair of the Ohio Civil Rights Commission
- The Honorable Michael Bell – Former Mayor of Toledo
- Representative Juanita Brent – Ohio Representative
- Dr. Ronnie Dunn—Cleveland State University, Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Interim Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
- Dr. Robin S. Engel—University of Cincinnati, Professor of Criminal Justice and Director of IACP/UC Center of Police Research and Policy
- Officer Anthony L. Johnson—Columbus Police Department and member, Fraternal Order of Police
- BCI Superintendent Joe Morbitzer— Ohio Attorney General's Office
- Reverend Walter S. Moss— Pastor and CIRV Project Director, Stark County Prosecutor's Office
- The Honorable Ronald J. O'Brien—Former Franklin County Prosecutor
- Chief Justin Páez—Dublin Police Department and member of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
- Sheriff Rob Streck – Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and member of the Buckeye State Sheriff's Association

Ex officio members:

- Representative Phil Plummer – Ohio Representative
- The Honorable Tom Roberts—former Ohio Senator and President, Ohio Conference of Units of NAACP
- The late Honorable Louis Stokes— former member of Congress
- The late Honorable George V. Voinovich—former U.S. Senator, Governor of Ohio, and Mayor of Cleveland
- Senator Sandra Williams – Ohio Senator

The purpose of the Collaborative is to advise and work with the Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) at the Ohio Department of Public Safety to implement the Task Force's recommendations, as identified in the Executive Order.

## September 8, 2021 Meeting of the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board

The Ohio Collaborative meeting was held on September 8<sup>th</sup> in the Atrium of the Ohio Department of Public Safety. The following members attended:

- Commissioner Lori Barreras, Ohio Civil Rights Commission
- The Honorable Michael Bell, former mayor of Toledo
- Juanita Brent, Ohio Representative
- Officer Anthony Johnson, Columbus Police Department
- BCI Superintendent Joe Morbitzer, Ohio Attorney General's Office
- Chief Justin Páez, Dublin Police Department
- Sheriff Rob Streck, Montgomery County
- Assistant Director Karen Huey, Ohio Department of Public Safety
- Executive Director Karhlton Moore, Office of Criminal Justice Services
- Reverend Walter Moss (attended virtually)

The meeting presenters included:

- Officer Scott Dressler, Richfield Police Department and School Resource Officer for Revere Local Schools
- Napoleon Bell, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Franklin County Sheriff's Office
- Dr. Renée Hill, Senior Advisor, Columbus State Community College
- Chief Sean Asbury, Columbus State Community College Police Department

The meeting started at 10:05 am.

### Opening remarks

Assistant Director (AD) Huey introduced herself and welcomed those members who attended in person, as well as those who joined via Microsoft Teams. AD Huey discussed some of the pressing issues being addressed by DPS agencies. EMA has been busy monitoring COVID and assisting with victims of Hurricane Ida. Additionally, ARPA dollars are coming to the state, and DPS has been having discussions about how these funds can be used in public safety. DPS has participated in national calls regarding Afghan refugees. They are arriving into the U.S. through two airports--Dulles and Philadelphia—and from there they are sent to military bases, and then on to refugee settlement centers. There are eight such settlements in Ohio.

AD Huey gave a brief overview of the topics and the speakers for the day.

Executive Director (ED) Moore welcomed attendees and expressed appreciation for being able to see so many in person. He echoed AD Huey's comments about how busy DPS divisions are. ED Moore stressed that while we have accomplished a great deal with the Collaborative despite the constraints of COVID, there is still much more work to be done.

### Juvenile standard discussion

ED Moore started by pointing out that we have had discussions in the past about the juvenile standard, and we need to think about the best way to move forward—with a model policy or a standard? We've heard the academic perspective on how the juvenile mind works. But we also want to get the perspective from the field from those whose jobs involve daily engagement with juveniles.

ED Moore introduced Scott Dressler, Richfield Police Department and SRO for Revere Local Schools. Officer Dressler was the Ohio SRO officer of the year in 2020.

#### Presentation by Officer Dressler

Officer Dressler has held the SRO position for Revere Local Schools for eight years. He works with four schools in the district. On a daily basis, he goes to all 4 schools for arrival/dismissal. He also stops by during lunches and recess, and he interacts and/or monitors students' social media such as Instagram and Twitter. In the summer months he maintains his role as SRO to allow for continued interactions with youth. There are plenty of youth activities that take place at the schools and in the community during the summer, such as sports practice, Safety Town, and lunch programs. The SRO program receives a great deal of support (including financial support) from the community, which he acknowledges is not the case for all police departments and schools.

In order to be viewed as an integral part of the schools, Officer Dressler recognized the need to be seen as approachable. He changed his uniform to be more casual and less 'paramilitary,' although he still carries the usual equipment on his gun belt. He sits with students at lunch and initiates conversations. Over time, youth have come to trust him and to open up to him. He understands that there are students that have things going at home or elsewhere that can impact them at school. When officers in neighboring jurisdictions encounter problematic youth, they have learned to reach out to Officer Dressler so he can provide them with perspective about what may be going on in the student's home life. Officer Dressler meets regularly with officers in neighboring departments to find out about emerging issues with the youth in his schools, and he can provide the officers with perspective about what may be going on in a student's home life that could contribute to unruly or delinquent behavior. Most juveniles in Summit County who get in trouble with the law are referred to a juvenile diversion program, unless it is a very serious charge.

Officer Dressler made a few important points in response to questions from board members.

- First, SRO duties involve more than providing safety and security, although this is a big component of his job. He spends a great deal of time teaching in the classroom as well.
- Second, crisis intervention is huge. Students often struggle with anxiety and depression, and issues at home or the impact of COVID can facilitate such feelings. Having training in crisis intervention is very important for all officers, not only SROs. It allows officers to see beyond the incident to understand why individuals are behaving the way they are. Training in crisis intervention is not mandated.
- Third, the 'trust factor' is huge. Initially, kids saw him only as law enforcement, not as someone there to help them. To build trust with the kids, there are a few important considerations: 1) confidentiality—conversations remain confidential unless there is the potential for harm to self/others or if criminal activity is involved. 2) Being present and visible in the schools and interacting with kids—it is important to listen to kids in their normal environment. Youth should understand that the SRO has a vested interest in their lives.

Officer Dressler spends most of his time in the high school. He also monitors social media, particularly in the middle school years, as social bullying starts around 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

AD Huey and ED Moore thanked Officer Dressler for his presentation. ED Moore then introduced Napoleon Bell, Franklin County Sheriff's Office and Dr. Renée Hill, Senior Advisor, Columbus State Community College, to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.

#### Presentation by Napoleon Bell and Dr. Renée Hill

Mr. Bell previously served with the Columbus Police Department, the Mayor's Office, and currently serves at the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. He is a Certified Diversity Professional. Dr. Hill has worked at Columbus State Community College for 22 years as a senior executive. She is also a Certified Diversity Professional. Dr. Hill works closely with the Columbus State Police Department to institutionalize diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace.

A handout of the presentation was provided.

Having a devoted DEI specialist in a law enforcement agency is quite rare—Dr. Hill identified three agencies in Ohio: Franklin County Sheriff's Office (FCSO), Columbus State Community College (CSCC) Police Department, and Summit County Sheriff's Office. Nationwide, they have identified roughly 10 departments with devoted DEI specialists. To encourage information sharing and to support and promote best practices regarding DEI in the workplace, they started National LE DEI Collaborative.

A few key points were highlighted in the presentation or discussed in response to questions asked by board members.

- Discussion of DEI has to start with leadership. There needs to be visible buy-in from leadership, and the efforts need to be impactful. Need to have very intentional conversations from the start, and to listen in order to understand, which can be difficult.
- The benefits of DEI in the workplace are many: increased employee satisfaction, stronger and more consistent employee performance, greater diversification of skills and creativity, directly addressing racism and prejudice, improved agency reputation, greater understanding and empathy within and outside the agency. Additionally, organizations with sustainable DEI strategies see an increase in organizational inclusion, job effort, employee retention, and employee performance.
- The goal of DEI is to create a welcoming and inclusive work environment that is culturally competent internally and externally. There must be workplace accessibility. Service to diverse populations is necessary. There should be education that includes training, campaigns, and safe spaces to have conversations without fear of retribution. Career-long mentoring should be considered. Minority recruitment is important. And there must be accountability in terms of policies, procedures, transparency. It is important to look at these with an equity lens. Expressing DEI in communications is important, and the way in which communication is facilitated, as well as the audience to whom you are communicating must be considered.
- It is important to measure success. One cannot simply do the work because it's a good thing to do. One needs to understand impact. Performance measurement can be done on a variety of variables, such as staff diversity, procurement, policies, virtual and visual communication, inclusive/educational programming. A climate survey can be incorporated to give direction on the critical issues and to identify priorities when starting DEI work. FCSO conducted a climate survey to serve as a baseline for measuring improvement. CSCC will be doing a climate survey at the institutional level, with some emphasis on the PD.

Dr. Hill and Mr. Bell introduced CSCC Police Department Chief Sean Asbury to speak about his experiences working with Dr. Hill as the department's DEI specialist. The chief realized early on that he truly did not understand DEI, and eventually learned that many of their initiatives were not DEI. He noted that there is an atmosphere of fear around DEI, as it is often thought of as a response to a problematic workplace incident. Training is often the end result. Trainers need to create an atmosphere that is safe for conversation. Laying blame and insinuating racism stops the conversation before it can start. And training is not enough--having regular conversations with one another and with the diversity professional is important.

DEI is not considered a program—it is a continuous journey that needs to start with intentional conversations. The foundations for DEI started for CSCC in September, but the chief began considering it in 2019 as a result of the riots that occurred about 18-24 months ago. It made him wonder why the riots were happening. What do we need to do differently? How do we engage and build trust? We can't even begin to change if officers don't understand why there was an uprising to begin with. There was definitely skepticism when the DEI journey started, but now they are starting to engage and to create safe spaces to ask questions without fear of punishment.

Cost considerations for FCSO included a climate survey, initial training to command staff, an executive retreat, and salary for the DEI specialist. FCSO has a diversity committee that helps the DEI specialist with some of the work.

A question arose regarding thoughts on legislation regarding critical race (HB322 and HB327), which will prohibit training for public employees. The general consensus was that the work doesn't have to be called "DEI". The work is needed, regardless of what we call it.

Board members thanked the presenters for the DEI discussion, noting the importance of the work they are doing. Having DEI discussions can be difficult and uncomfortable, but it is necessary to take a 'deep dive' to understand these issues so that we can learn how to do things differently. Unfortunately, there is a small percentage of people who will never be convinced of the importance of these discussions.

AD Huey thanked the speakers for a very informative presentation. Speaker contact information will be sent to all members.

#### Final remarks

Before adjournment, a few members asked about the focus of the juvenile standard. Sheriff Streck noted that he has had more chiefs and sheriffs reach out to him about this standard than any other standard. ED Moore acknowledged that this has been a difficult standard to write conceptually because of all that it encompasses. He noted that our standard on mass protests was also very difficult to write, but we were able to focus it. OCJS will send out some thoughts on areas the standard could touch in order to get feedback from the group. ED Moore encouraged board members, who all serve as representatives of larger groups, to have their constituents contact OCJS directly as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52.

The next meeting is November 17<sup>th</sup>.