

September 30, 2015

Senate Bill No. 318  
Session of 2015

Dear Committee:

I am here as the Mayor of the City of Clairton to discuss how important this bill would address our city and towns in similar status. Clairton is a small blue collar mill town. For years the decline in the steel industry and the demand for coke and coal crumbled Clairton as well as the whole Mon Valley area.

By 1988, Clairton was taken over by the state and declared as an Act 47 community. We had our police dept. furloughed and the citizens left for jobs and safety. Businesses could not survive as well. While the city boasted 25,000 residents at its peak, today we have approximately 6,800 residents that represent poverty to moderate income at best. Many are elderly, homebound, missing the American dream, not eating properly and can't afford their medications. These very people rely on city officials for public safety, police, fire, and ambulance service.

While we struggle to support these public safety services, and they are challenging, there is something that I believe you, as elected officials, can do to help strengthen our position. That would be to support House Bill No. 318.

Clairton is a poor town. Approximately 52% of the town is rentals and our police are out day and night to protect our citizens and their property. This is our biggest challenge. With our small budget, we can only support 6 to 8 full-time officers and need an additional 12 to 14 part-time officers to support our demand. Do you realize how difficult it is to hire a part-time officer at \$10.00 an hour with no benefits, and it is next to impossible to keep these officers long term. Honestly, it's been nothing but a revolving door.

Clairton, because of low to moderate income and having teens with little or no education, results in too much crime. That is why our part-time officers are so important. Plenty of crime, plenty of risk for little pay.

Please help support this bill to enhance our ability to keep part-time officers that get to know our community and would make a good full-time officer. Presently, we hire part-time officers at such a low rate and no benefits for such a dangerous job. They really do put their lives on the line with each and every call ... they never know what they will encounter or how fast the situation can escalate. I find it difficult to fathom a part-time officer's pay can be equivalent to that of a fast food worker or a lawn care worker. These officers work for low pay, no benefits and limited hours all in the hopes of landing a full-time position or anything in law enforcement

that will allow them to make a respectable wage for his family and himself, not asking for much for what they do.

I have been the Mayor in Clairton for the past 6 years. I have had a lot of bad news come through my office, but when I received word that one of my officers was shot multiple times and the outcome was grim. I was shocked and in disbelief that one of my part-time officers was shot while protecting our citizens for less than \$10.00 per hr. This was a tough time for Clairton and more important, my officer and his family and loved ones. Jim made a tough recovery, with his strength and courage, he lives, but is in a wheelchair and may never walk again, but I never heard him blame the bad guy, the city or complain about his pay. Because he is that part-time officer that accepted the job under those terms and is still proud of being a police officer.

I plead with the committee to please pass this bill or any bill that would send a message to part-time officers that the people and our country appreciate them.

Mayor Richard Lattanzi

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Lattanzi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.