



Representatives Louis W Blessing III, and Al Landis

Sponsor Testimony HB 19

February 14, 2017

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Chair Manning, Vice Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Johnson, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 19. This bill seeks to clarify language on whether or not a person manufacturing controlled substances can be charged with arson if a fire or explosion occurs.

House Bill 19 was brought to my attention by a constituent, who is the Fire Chief of a town in my district. A fire occurred, within the district, that was the direct result of methamphetamine manufacturing. The prosecutor only went for a criminal manufacturing charge because the language in the Ohio Revised Code was not clear. Other counties within Ohio have interpreted this part of the code differently, and have applied the charge. Currently, in Hamilton County, if this situation were to occur, only a drug manufacturing charge would be applied.

This bill will clarify that a person manufacturing a controlled substance can be charged with arson in addition to drug manufacturing charges when a fire or explosion occurs to property. Property will be considered the offender's, or another person's, house, vehicle, building, or another structure. A violation would be a misdemeanor of the first degree, unless the value of the property or physical harm is one thousand dollars or more. If the damage amounts to more than one thousand dollars, it will be a felony of the fourth degree. Thank you, and we will be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.