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Sarah M. LaTourette
Assistant Majority Floor Leader

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House Bill 228 Sponsor Testimony **June 20, 2017**

Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Lipps, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 228. As my joint sponsor, Representative Johnson, discussed, this legislation modifies portions of Ohio Revised Code relating to self-defense and concealed carry.

Essentially, my goal with the portion of the legislation that Representative Johnson detailed is to ensure that law abiding citizens in our state don't have to try to decide if they will be able to defend themselves in court before they decide to defend their family in a life and death situation.

House Bill 228 also includes several updates to concealed carry provisions in Ohio Revised Code. In the 131st General Assembly, we passed legislation authorizing additional entities to allow concealed carry on their premises, but we neglected to make changes to the portions of ORC requiring proper signage for these same areas. HB 228 amends the sections of code requiring these signs, making sure that individuals are not breaking the law by not posting a sign that is in direct conflict with their concealed carry policies. A full list of the locations affected can be found on page 3 of the LSC bill analysis. This legislation does not require that these locations remove their signs, it simply gives them the option if they so choose. One of my County Commissioners actually brought this concern to me after there was a disagreement over whether or not they were legally allowed to remove their sign once they authorized concealed carry on the premises. This language offers a much needed clean-up of ORC to address this concern.

House Bill 228 also standardizes penalties for those who improperly carry a concealed handgun. Generally, this legislation reduces the associated penalty to a minor misdemeanor, as long as no other crime is being committed at the time of the violation. The legislation also specifically addresses penalties for improperly handling firearms in a motor vehicle. Overall, the bill also reduces penalties for a number of these offenses to a minor misdemeanor. Again, it only does this if there are no other laws being broken.

77 South High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111
Phone: (614)644-5088
Email: Rep76@ohiohouse.gov

This legislation also reduces the civil penalty (from \$500 to \$150) for an active duty member of the armed forces who is arrested for carrying a concealed weapon due to being unable to promptly produce a valid military ID card or proper training credentials. (Continuing law retains the automatic dismissal of this fine if the individual produces the appropriate credentials within 10 days.)

The final section of the bill I'll discuss is the change to the "hands in plain sight" language. Current Ohio law requires a concealed handgun licensee to keep their "hands in plain sight" in the event of a traffic stop with a law enforcement officer. This vague language leads to an impossible situation, particularly when an individual is directed to obtain their license and registration, or asked to exit the vehicle. House Bill 228 simply clarifies that while "hands in plain sight" must still take place, there is an exception for when the law enforcement officer directs the licensee otherwise, or if doing so is deemed impractical.

While I understand this can be a tough conversation for some, I truly believe that the legislation you've heard my joint sponsor and I detail for you is a common sense, needed modification to the current self-defense and concealed carry laws in our state. As I mentioned earlier in my testimony, my main objective with this bill is to ensure that law abiding individuals across our state have the comfort of knowing they are legally protected when truly acting in self-defense and defending themselves or their families from a potentially deadly situation. Additionally, I believe the changes to concealed carry language included in the bill offer a much needed adjustment to help ensure that we are not unnecessarily punishing otherwise law-abiding citizens for what is often an unfortunate oversight.

Chair Roegner and members of the committee, thank you again for listening to our sponsor testimony on House Bill 228. Representative Johnson and I would now be more than happy to answer any questions.