

Proponent Testimony—Senate Bill 175
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House Civil Justice Committee

Thank you, Chairman Hambley, Vice-chairman Patton, Ranking Member Brown and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, for allowing me the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Senator Tim Schaffer's Amended Senate Bill 175.

During the last 20 years, there have tragically been a number of violent incidents which have occurred where perpetrators have targeted institutions and personnel who are presumed to be defenseless, such as at schools. What some may not realize is that there have been in that period over 20 violent incidents at houses of worship.

Names like Emanuel AME, Burnett Chapel, Tennessee Valley Unitarian, Overland Park Jewish Center, Tree of Life Synagogue, or the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin remind us that faith institutions and those they serve are at risk of being targets of mass violence. In response to that, many of these organizations have taken steps to institute security protocols to protect their members and guests, either hiring professional security, having a staff member, or sometimes, in the case of congregations, having a properly-licensed church member bring a firearm onto the premises.

Senate Bill 175 is intended to allow such institutions, along with all other non-profit corporations, to be able to create and maintain such security for their facilities and patrons and to have civil liability immunity extended to these entities for actions relative to providing such security.

As an officer of a local church myself, I am charged with not only maintaining the peace and purity of the church spiritually, but also have responsibility to ensure the physical safety of our members and guests while they worship at our facility. I appreciate Senator Schaffer's efforts and support the passage of this added level of protection for those entities that are working to provide needed services to citizen, and are legitimately concerned with protecting their personnel, clients and members from harm.

Thankfully, there have not been incidents of mass violence on a house of worship in Ohio, and with the provisions of Am. SB 175 being enacted, I am firmly convinced that there won't be in the future.

Thank you for your kind attention to my comments, and I would be happy to take any questions of the committee.