



Representative Bride Rose Sweeney
Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 517
House State and Local Government Committee
December 8, 2020

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 517. I brought this legislation forward after hearing from building officials and fire marshals for local governments across the State of Ohio. It is critical to the public's safety and Ohio's economic prosperity that state building and fire codes be exempt from unnecessary and dangerous rule reductions.

House Bill 517 would ensure that well-intended efforts to consolidate administrative code and slash regulations don't create the unintended consequence of jeopardizing nationally recognized safety guidelines. I am very supportive of cutting red tape when it comes to helping small business owners, supporting college students, or ensuring quality public services. However, in this case, it is important to let building officials and fire marshals do their jobs and keep Ohioans safe.

In the interest of public safety, the rule reduction requirements set forth in O.R.C. 121.95 should not apply to the Ohio Board of Building Standards nor the State Fire Marshal's office. If they were told to accomplish a 30 percent reduction, it would be difficult if not impossible to adopt the model construction and fire codes, developed by the International Code Council (ICC), into the Ohio Administrative Code. That would hurt Ohio businesses, affect insurance rates, impact the ability to compete for federal funding, and obliterate regulatory consistency by forcing local jurisdictions to adopt their own construction and fire requirements or risk public safety. This is a real possibility that we simply cannot let come to pass.

There are already exceptions written into R.C. 121.95, the state's two-for-one requirements for administrative rule reduction. This legislation would add building and fire codes to that list of exceptions, alleviating these concerns in the interest of public safety and continuity. While I applaud efforts to make Ohio a friendlier regulatory environment, I believe that rule reduction requirements could unintentionally affect Ohio's ability to adopt tried-and-true national fire and safety standards and put public safety as well as private businesses at risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering any questions.