

Proponent Testimony—Senate Bill 175
Barry Sheets, Executive Director
Institute for Principled Policy
October 9th, 2019
Senate Judiciary Committee

Thank you, Chairman Eklund, Vice-chairman Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, for allowing me the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Senator Tim Schaffer's 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.

Senate Bill 175 is intended to allow such institutions, as non-profit corporations, to be able to create and maintain security for their facilities and patrons and allow those individuals, whether officers, members, volunteers, or independent contractors who are allowed to carry a concealed weapon on the premises, to have civil liability immunity extended to them for their actions relative to providing such security if an incident requires them to return force on an assailant.

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 who are charged with protecting others from harm.

Thankfully, there have not been incidents of mass violence on a house of worship in Ohio, and with the provisions of 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.