

November 12, 2019

Chairman Eklund and honored members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of both the Pickerington Baptist Temple, which I am blessed to pastor, and the countless congregations of faith scattered across the great state of Ohio, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to advocate for this helpful piece of legislation.

Thank you Senator Tim Schaffer, of Ohio's 20th Senate District, for listening to the people you represent and proposing this common sense legislation. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the senators and representatives who have joined with Senator Schaffer, as Senate Bill 175 moves through the legislative process.

Over the course of America's history, there have been events that have altered the course of the American people: The Boston Massacre, which further spurred us to seek national independence and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which prompted America to enter the Second World War.

My generation has been marked by a pattern of domestic terrorism. Unspeakable events such as the World Trade Center Bombing, on February 26, 1993; the Oklahoma City Bombing, on April 19, 1995; the Columbine High School shooting, on April 20, 1999; and the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, on September 11, 2001.

In more recent history, we have faced domestic terrorism against houses of worship and people of faith.

On November 5, 2017, a psychopath entered a small Baptist church in rural Texas and murdered twenty-six innocent and defenseless people. On October 27, 2018, eleven people were murdered by a deranged man outside the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA.

The church I am blessed to pastor welcomes people from all backgrounds — all in an effort to share the Gospel of Christ: how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He rose from the dead on

the third day (1 Corinthians 15). Christ offers salvation to all who will repent of their sin and trust in Him (Acts 20:20-21).

As we seek to accomplish our mission, there are many things we must consider, such as the safety and well-being of all in attendance. We go to great lengths to ensure children are placed in the care and under the instruction of caring and qualified people. We have assembled a team of men who have been trained in various emergency protocols and procedures. We even allow a select group of people to carry a concealed firearm. They have fulfilled the State of Ohio's requirements and have received training from a retired State Highway Patrol Sergeant.

Though we have implemented and carefully maintain these procedures, we understand that men's actions are beyond our control, and that there could be a day when force must be used to stop a senseless act of violence against the people of our church.

Senate Bill 175 would extend civil immunity to our church as a whole, meaning the church herself would not face legal recourse in the case of such tragedy.

I pray that no church or other religious institution is ever forced to defend themselves against an act of domestic terror. However, if we are forced to take such action, I believe it is only right to extend to us the immunity Senate Bill 175 offers.

On behalf of my congregation, fellow church leaders, and congregations of faith scattered across our great state, I humbly ask that you allow Senate Bill 175 to pass through this Senate Judiciary Committee and be brought before your fellow Senators for a vote.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will be glad to answer any questions.

Sincerely,  
Brian VanAman