

**Testimony in Opposition to HB 272**  
**Ohio House Government Oversight Committee**  
**October 24, 2023**

Chairman Peterson, Vice-Chair Thomas, and Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to provide testimony in opposition to HB 272. My name is Rob Pierson and I am a life long resident of Ohio and have resided the past 29 years in Stark County. I retired at the end of last year as the administrator of the Stark County Child Support Agency after a 39 year career in the Child Support program. I also am a father, grandfather and husband who is concerned about safe communities for our children and grandchildren.

I am very concerned with this bill as a former county Child Support Administrator who had staff in a multi-use county building with courtrooms. I know the bill would not allow conceal carry into the building when court is in session. However, when hearings are not in session these buildings still have judges, magistrates and court employees in the building in their offices performing their jobs. This proposed law would make judges, magistrates and court staff less safe. In the world we live in today placing court staff at greater risk is dangerous.

Just a few weeks ago on October 19<sup>th</sup> in Washington County Maryland, tragically Judge Andrew Wilkinson was shot and killed outside his home in his own driveway. The shooter was an angry parent who was denied custody and visitation earlier that day in the judge's courtroom. In Jefferson County Ohio in August of 2017, common pleas court Judge Joseph Bruzzese Jr. was shot in a targeted ambush style attack as he made his way into the courthouse. Thankfully in this case the judge did survive that attempt on his life. As terrible as these two incidents were, think how much worse the outcomes could have been with other lives lost or injured if either assailant had access to go into a building with a conceal carry firearm.

The Ohio Judicial Conference in a letter signed by Executive Director Paul Pfeifer to the bill's sponsors, Rep. Adam Mathews and Rep. Justin Pizzulli, lists a number of concerns they have with the bill including if someone walks into the building with a gun when the court is not in session, but is still in the building when the court goes into session. In their letter they stated the Judicial Conference cannot support the allowance of weapons in any facility where a courtroom is located.

In Stark County our multi-use government building which houses the family court and probate court also provides space to the county commissioners, the county auditor, the county treasurer, and legal staff for children services and child support. This is common in many counties in Ohio. All of these offices and staff will be at risk if conceal carry weapons can be brought into a shared building with court rooms. All of these operations at times may have angry and disgruntled citizens, in the worst case such a person could be upset enough to do harm with a firearm to public servants if given the opportunity.

I ask each committee member would you want the Statehouse and the offices of senators and representatives exposed to the same risk that county court officials and public servants will be under if HB 272 becomes law? Of course not. We need to protect our public servants and not increase their risk of being in harm's way as they perform their jobs.

I respectfully ask that you vote against this bill.

Sincerely,

Rob Pierson – Massillon, Ohio