



Representative Bernie Willis

74th House District

Amended House Bill No. 77- Sponsor Testimony

June 11, 2024

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Amended H.B. 77. This legislation will establish the basic requirements and prohibitions governing the operations of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones in Ohio law.

Ohio is the birthplace of aviation, and we believe it is even better branded as the HOME of Aviation. This is a distinction which we hold dearly, and it is only reasonable then that we continue to act ahead of the NEXT generation of aviation in preparation for Advanced Air Mobility vehicles (flying cars). With this advancement in aviation, it is prudent to set standards and regulations to ensure safe and practical guidelines to protect the airspace and the trust of Ohioans. This legislation aims to establish in State law the UAV standards and guidelines which their operators must abide by. This need is highlighted by the regular abuse of FAA regulations and restrictions in Ohio that must be pursued and prosecuted by our US Attorneys in Federal court. Ohio needs simple laws that mirror the Federal aviation regulations for speedy prosecution in Ohio courts to better deter future abuses and endangering of Ohioans.

Specifically, this bill sets necessary private use prohibitions for persons operating UAV's.

- If Federal law or regulations prohibit its operation, unless the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has granted a special use authorization.
- In a careless or reckless manner that endangers any person or property, or with willful or wrongful disregard to others' rights or safety.
- In a manner that interferes with the operations or activities of law enforcement, fire rescue, or emergency medical services; and
- To photograph, record, or loiter over or near a critical facility in furtherance of any criminal offense.

This legislation additionally makes clear the ability of local governments to protect their airspace. It allows a municipality, township, park district or county to adopt ordinances, regulations or resolutions regarding the use and operation of UAV's owned and operated by them and the use and operation of recreational UAVs on public property. With the technology

industry growth in Ohio, the use of drones will continue to soar. This bill takes the necessary actions to facilitate this exciting frontier and ensures a safer sky for all Ohioans.

Since its introduction, this legislation has had several key amendments added to it which were brought forth by interested parties across our great state. It is a collaborative effort to truly help Ohio take the next steps in the air.

Pending any questions, this concludes my testimony on Amended House Bill 77. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak and I would be happy to take any questions.