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House Public Safety Committee
Sponsor Testimony – H.B. 68
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Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 68, a simple clarifying bill to allow our smaller municipalities the same rights as our larger ones with respect to local control of concealed carry.

This bill is a reintroduction of House Bill 272 from last General Assembly, which passed the House by a vote of 57-29 in 2023.

Current law gives permissive authority for municipalities to allow concealed carry in their city buildings. This change was from SB199 of the 131st General Assembly and still holds after constitutional carry was passed last term. However, combining the current language with other parts of the revised code could potentially prevent a municipality from allowing concealed carry in its own chambers if they also sometimes house a courtroom.

In many of our smaller communities, good stewardship of taxpayer dollars often means a single multi-purpose city or village hall. This city hall may house the tax department, council chambers, and a room that is sometimes a courtroom.

Our bill simply allows municipalities, which already have the authority to recognize concealed carry in their secondary buildings like the electric building, storage garages, and the like, to expand that protection to themselves even if in other instances or in other wings their home buildings are used for courtroom proceedings.

This bill recognizes the need to treat court proceedings with necessary care. In keeping with current law, a municipality cannot authorize concealed carry in a building that is entirely a courthouse. If part of the municipal hall is used for a courtroom, the municipality can only allow concealed carry when there are no court services in operation. This includes session, attorney meetings, or even the clerk of courts being open for business.

As a reminder, this concealed carry recognition only applies if the local government affirmatively decides to pass an ordinance to do so. The permissive nature of this bill, as well as safeguards put in place to ensure that it only applies to shared-use buildings where the decision makers actually hold their meetings, make this a common-sense clarification for current law.

House Bill 68 additionally includes a provision added in the committee process last General Assembly to correct an oversight in current law blocking some former residents from seeking relief from weapons disability. Currently, if a person is prohibited from carrying firearms due to an indictment, conviction or guilty plea, or delinquent child adjudication, they must apply for relief in the court of common pleas of the county in which they live. This excludes those who have since moved out of Ohio, leaving them with no way to seek relief. This bill would therefore allow non-residents to apply for relief in the county in which the indictment was entered or in which the conviction, guilty plea, or adjudication occurred.

To empower local control, strengthen our concealed carry framework, and improve our firearms laws, we ask you to favorably report this bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and we are happy to answer any questions.