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Sponsor Testimony S.B. 105

“Alyssa’s Law”

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 105, Alyssa's Law. This legislation is designed to strengthen the safety infrastructure of our schools and ensure that every child, teacher, and staff member has access to a secure learning environment.

This bill is named in memory of Alyssa Alhadeff, a vibrant and promising 14-year-old who tragically lost her life during the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Her story is a powerful and painful reminder of the stakes we face when school safety is not adequately addressed. In the wake of her daughter's death, Alyssa's mother, Lori Alhadeff, became a national advocate for school safety, channeling her grief into meaningful action. Thanks to her efforts, what is now known as Alyssa's Law has already been adopted in New Jersey, Texas, and New York. These states have taken important steps to modernize emergency response protocols in schools, and now it is Ohio's turn to lead.

When an emergency strikes in a school setting (particularly during an active shooter situation) every second is critical. Traditional emergency protocols, such as making a phone call or alerting the front office, can take too long and leave too much room for confusion. Delays, even of a few seconds, can be the difference between life and death.

The goal of Alyssa's Law is to eliminate those delays by providing a silent, immediate line of communication between school staff and local law enforcement.

Senate Bill 105 is a funded mandate that requires every public and chartered nonpublic school in Ohio to implement a wearable panic alert system in each of its school buildings. This technology empowers school personnel with a discreet device that can silently send an alert to emergency responders and initiate an immediate lockdown. This rapid-response capability is essential to protecting students and staff in moments of crisis.

In addition, the bill ensures that local law enforcement agencies will have access to vital security data, such as surveillance camera feeds, building maps, and access control systems, so they are better equipped to respond effectively and swiftly.

To help schools meet this requirement, the bill appropriates \$25 million in fiscal year 2026 to reimburse schools for the cost of installing and maintaining these panic alert systems. This investment reflects our commitment to not only mandating improved safety but also supporting the schools that must implement these measures.

We have already seen how similar systems have prevented greater tragedy in other parts of the country. One such example occurred at Apalachee High School in Georgia, where staff used a wearable alert device to respond instantly and prevent further escalation during a school security incident. Just as we require fire alarms and sprinkler systems to protect school communities from fire-related disasters, we must also provide tools that address today's threats. Wearable panic alert systems are part of that modern solution.

Senate Bill 105 is an effective way to prevent deaths in our schools. It addresses the urgent need to protect students and educators during the school day. It sends a message to Ohio families that their children's safety is a top priority. SB 105 honors Alyssa's memory and the memories of all those lost to school violence by taking real, actionable steps to prevent future tragedies.

Thank you for your attention to this bill. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.