



Representative Al Cutrona
59th Ohio House District

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 243.

With the passage of SB 140 last General Assembly, we decriminalized the possession of certain types of knives. However, cities and towns could enact new knife laws exposing citizens to stops and prosecution for simply possessing a tool they use for work.

House Bill 243 preemptively establishes that no political subdivisions can contribute to a confusing patchwork of knife regulations for Ohioans. This legislation also retroactively repeals and voids any differing rules that cities and towns have made regarding restrictions on knives. To put it simply, HB 243 ensures that both citizens and law enforcement know the law, and it facilitates consistent enforcement throughout the state.

This bill is Criminal Justice Reform we can all support. We know that minorities are much more likely to be arrested under these varying knife laws, which can start their involvement with the criminal justice system.

Arizona enacted the nation's first Knife Preemption Law in 2010. They were followed by New Hampshire and Utah in 2011, Georgia in 2012, Alaska, Kansas, and Tennessee in 2013, Oklahoma and Texas in 2015, Wisconsin in 2016, Montana in 2019, and West Virginia in 2020. In all twelve of these states, no issues have arisen regarding knife law preemption. Furthermore, there has been no effort to repeal these laws.

It is my hope that members of this committee see HB 243 as an opportunity to protect the unwary from overbearing and confusing knife regulations and as an opportunity for Ohio to join 12 other states in leading the way on Knife Preemption Law. I want to thank you for your time and attention to this matter, and I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.