

House Committees

State & Local Government, Ranking Member  
Primary and Secondary Education  
Public Utilities Committee  
Ways & Means Committee  
Pensions Committee



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**Representative Sean Patrick Brennan  
14<sup>th</sup> House District**

**6-25-24**

**Sponsor Testimony**

**H.B. 525: Regards Assault When the Victim is a School Employee or Volunteer**

Chair Abrams, Vice-Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Ohio House Committee on Criminal Justice.

Currently, under the Ohio Revised Code, assault of a school teacher, administrator, or bus driver is a felony of the fifth degree. However, no other classifications of employees or volunteers are listed within the ORC school assault language. As a result, school aides, other school employees, and volunteers are being attacked by students and parents without the same protections as their co-workers.

As an educator for over three decades, it is an honor to present H.B. 525 – a bill that will expand the protection if the victim is a school teacher, administrator, school bus operator, or other school employee or volunteer and the offense occurs in a school, on school premises, in a school building, on a school bus, or while the victim is outside of school premises or a school bus and is engaged in duties or official responsibilities associated with the victim's employment or position including, but not limited to, driving, accompanying, or chaperoning students at or on class or field trips, athletic events, or other school extracurricular activities or functions outside of school premises.

"School employee or volunteer" means any person employed by or serving as a volunteer at a school district, educational service center, other public school, or private school and any contractor or person hired by a contractor engaged in providing services to a school district, educational service center, other public school, or private school in any position.

Schools are the backbone of our society, nurturing young minds and shaping the future of our communities, state, and nation. Teachers, administrators, support staff, and volunteers play pivotal roles in this process. They dedicate their lives to educating and safeguarding our children,

often going above and beyond their job descriptions to ensure a safe and conducive learning environment. It is our duty to protect them as fiercely as they protect and nurture our children.

Unfortunately, incidents of violence against school employees and volunteers are on the rise. In fact, according to recent reports, school staff face increasing threats and physical assaults, ranging from minor injuries to severe harm. These acts of violence not only endanger the lives of those involved but also disrupt the educational process and create a climate of fear.

A safe learning environment is fundamental to effective education. When school staff and volunteers feel threatened, the quality of education suffers. Teachers cannot teach effectively, and students cannot learn efficiently if the environment is marred by fear and violence. Further, there is no doubt that the rise of assaults on school employees and volunteers is contributing to the challenge to attract and retain people to these needed positions. By making assaults on school employees and volunteers a felony, we send a clear message that violence has no place in our educational institutions.

Classifying assaults on school employees and volunteers as a felony provides stronger legal protection and deterrence. A felony charge brings more significant consequences, serving as a stronger deterrent and demonstrating our commitment to protecting those who educate and serve our children.

Our school employees and volunteers deserve our utmost respect and protection. They are not just employees or volunteers; they are mentors, role models, and often, second parents to our children. By elevating the legal repercussions for assaulting them, we affirm their value and the critical role they play in our society.

When we protect our school employees and volunteers, we invest in the future of our society. Schools are microcosms of our communities. A safe and secure school environment contributes to the overall safety and well-being of the community. By taking a strong stand against violence in schools, we set a precedent for zero tolerance of violence in all aspects of life.

I want to thank my colleague, Representative Pizzulli for joining me on this important piece of legislation. I also want to thank Randy Weston from the Ohio Association of Professional School Employees (OAPSE) for his assistance with the bill. Finally, I want to thank all of Ohio's public school employees and volunteers for all that they do day in and day out to serve Ohio's young learners. You all deserve to be equally and strongly protected under Ohio law, so that you can do your job to the best of your ability. Finally, I want to thank our bipartisan co-sponsors for their support of the bill.

It is time to stand up and demand that all school employees and volunteers receive the same protections and respect they deserve in a school building. Let us come together to support this crucial change, ensuring that our schools remain sanctuaries of learning and growth, free from the shadow of violence.

Thank you again Chair Abrams and members of the committee. We would be honored by your support of H.B. 525.