

Proponent Testimony  
Senate Bill 112  
The Ohio Childhood Safety Act

Chairmen Brenner Vice Chair O'Brien and Ranking Member Ingram, thank you for the Opportunity to Testify today on SB 112 The Ohio Childhood Safety Act. My name is Timothy J. Cassell and I'm here to provide proponent testimony. Many of you know me for my work on behalf of Community Schools or from my time serving in the House. However you may not know I was a carpenter prior to my election to State Representative and one of my many skillsets was hardware installation as I have installed thousands of doors and hardware over 15 years in the trade. I am here today because I believe this bill is very important and deserves your attention and passage.

I want to thank Senator Rulli for bringing this legislation forward and to give you an idea of how important this legislation is I am going to take a few minutes to go back in time. Let's step back 115 years to March 4, 1908 location Collinwood Ohio to one of the most tragic stories in Ohio's History. On that solemn day 172 elementary children, two teachers and a rescuer lost their lives in the Lakewood Elementary School fire. Now most are under the impression that it was because of doors that didn't open outward but actually that was not the issue the doors did in fact open out however they did not open as they should have because one was not unlocked and the other had faulty hardware that was difficult to operate and once pressure was put against the door the hardware failed to operate. In the aftermath the children were found piled against the nonfunctioning doors. This tragedy did bring about some much needed changes in building codes for not only schools but all commercial buildings.

Now let's get to the heart of SB 112 the main function is an annual inspection of doors and hardware for proper functionality.

Even with the changes to code and modern building codes hardware does require some minimal maintenance and inspection to guarantee proper function. Its been my experience that in most cases small adjustments like tightening hinge screws and hardware fasteners will solve most issues. In some cases the hinges may need shimmed to realign the door properly or the door closer may need balanced all of which should only take ten to twenty minutes. This is really preventative maintenance and if kept up hardware and doors can last several decades. I believe this bill can actually be seen as a cost saving measure over time as an annual inspection will point out issues that can be addressed before actual replacement is needed. SB 112 does not require hardware to be updated to current code but rather repaired or replaced with like functioning hardware within 18 months of the reported issue. SB 112 is not a rip and replace bill that will be costly but rather a common sense approach to insuring our children are in safe buildings. The thought behind SB112 was not to create a costly burden to schools but rather to provide much needed enhancement to safety to in all our schools. There is one part however I think needs some further discussion. The noncompliance fine, \$1000.00 per uncorrected item, in the bill and I am not against carrot and stick methodology but I would like to see a carrot and not just a stick. Therefore I like the idea of the fine associated with the noncompliance going into a fund that schools could later apply to for assistance in offsetting costs associated with making repairs to be compliant with SB112.

Thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony today. Chairman Brenner I would be happy to answer any question the committee may have.

Respectfully Submitted  
Timothy J. Cassell