

To: Members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
From: David Passalacqua, President Communications Workers of America Local 4340
Date: May 8, 2023
Re: Proponent Testimony SB88

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks Hudson and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for allowing me time to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 88. My name is David Passalacqua and I have been a utility worker since 2000. I have had the opportunity to provide much needed communication services for the members of my community as an outside field technician for 20 years and now as an inside technician.

Senate Bill 88 will expand the offense of aggravated menacing against utility workers while performing their on-the-job duties. This bill is necessary to protect the safety and well-being of utility workers who provide essential services to our communities.

Utility workers are responsible for maintaining and installing electric, natural gas, water, sewer, communications and other services that people rely on every day. Utility workers often work in hazardous conditions and face various risks and challenges while on the job. While utility workers are trained on safe work practices for their jobs, but there is no training for random acts of violence.

One such instance occurred in October of 2016. One of our field technicians was attacked and shot while trying to provide service to a customer. After undergoing months of medical treatments and therapies he was able to return to work. Thankfully he did not lose his life, but his life has been forever changed. This led us to support HB 276 in the 132nd General Assembly and are in support of SB 88 today.

SB 88 would make it a felony to knowingly cause or attempt to cause physical harm to a utility worker while on the job. This would deter such acts of violence and send a clear message that utility workers deserve respect and protection on the job. This bill would also align Ohio with other states that have similar laws to protect utility workers, such as West Virginia, New York and Idaho. This bill would not infringe on anyone's rights or freedoms, but rather uphold the rule of law and the public interest.

I urge Ohio to pass this bill and stand with utility workers throughout our great state. Utility workers are our neighbors, our friends, and our families and deserve our support.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide comments on SB 88.