

HCS HB 485 -- CONCEALED FIREARMS IN CHURCHES

SPONSOR: Baker

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 10 to 4. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 7 to 3.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 485.

This bill allows the concealed carrying of firearms in churches and other places of worship by a person with a valid concealed carry permit.

This bill is similar to HB 1698 (2022).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill ensures the constitutional right to bear arms is not stripped upon entering a place of worship. Law abiding citizens should not be stripped of the right to self-defense in order to enter a place of worship. Religious leaders have voiced their support for this bill. Further, each church and place of worship may still exercise their private property rights to exclude firearms with the placing of a sign if they feel it is appropriate. Concealed carry permit (ccw) holders are a force multiplier for security. This bill removes churches and places of worship from liability and regulation, allowing each place of worship to make the appropriate decision for themselves. Forty other states currently allow for the carry of firearms in churches.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Baker; Susan Myers; William Bland; Edward (Tony) Shepherd, ABATE For Missouri; Royce Barondes; and Ike Skelton.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that churches and places of worship are in opposition to this legislation. The physical space of a church should reflect a spirit of security and safety; the proliferation of guns in churches does not accomplish this. This bill bypasses church leaders' ability to decide how best to handle practices on their premises. This is a decision best left to each individual place of worship, not to the General Assembly. This bill is an infringement on the First Amendment. Further, this bill is unnecessary. Church leaders are already empowered to do

what this bill purports to seek to accomplish. This bill seeks to address a problem that does not exist, and instead creates constitutional and safety problems of its own in the process. This bill directly and negatively impacts the life and conduct of faith leaders.

Testifying in person against the bill were Missouri Catholic Conference; J. T. Young, Moms Demand Action For Gun Sense In America; Rev. Perrin Crouch; Brian Kaylor, Word&Way; and Nimrod Chapel Jr., Missouri NAACP and Missouri Baptist Progressive & Minority Convention.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.