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H.B. 597
136th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

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Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Sigrist and T. Mathews

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SUMMARY

- Prohibits a person from knowingly operating an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) over a school.
- Makes a violation of that prohibition a minor misdemeanor on the first offense and a fourth degree misdemeanor on each subsequent offense.
- Establishes exemptions from the bill's general prohibition for certain individuals.
- Allows a school's principal, vice principal, or a resource or peace officer that witnesses the operation of a UAV over the school to temporarily take possession of that UAV.
- Allows a court to dismiss a charge if the defendant is younger than 17 at the time of the offense and if the judge finds that the defendant did not intend to use the UAV to cause physical harm to another person or damage to school property.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Unmanned aerial vehicles over schools

The bill prohibits a person from knowingly operating an unmanned aerial vehicle, or UAV (commonly referred to as a drone), over a school.¹ For purposes of the bill's prohibition, a "school" means all of the following:

- A city, exempted village, local, or joint vocational school district;
- A community school;
- A science, technology, engineering, and mathematics school;

¹ R.C. 4561.54(A).

- A chartered nonpublic school; and
- An educational service center, on behalf of a school or district.²

A person who is found guilty of operating a UAV over a school is guilty of a minor misdemeanor on the first offense and a fourth-degree misdemeanor on each subsequent offense.³

Exemptions

The bill exempts the following individuals from its general prohibition against operating a UAV over a school:

- A person under contract with or otherwise acting under the direction of or on behalf of the federal government, the state government, another governmental entity, or a law enforcement agency;
- A person operating a UAV that is being used for a legitimate commercial purpose, provided the operator has obtained all required Federal Aviation Administration authorizations;
- A person who has the prior written consent of the school's principal, vice principal, or a school resource officer or a peace officer assigned to that school; and
- A person who is under 14.⁴

Temporary possession

The bill allows a school's principal, vice principal, or a school resource officer or peace officer that witnesses the operation of a UAV over the school to temporarily take possession of the UAV to provide it to a local law enforcement agency as evidence of a violation of the general prohibition.⁵

Dismissal

The bill allows a court to dismiss a charge if the defendant is younger than 17 at the time of the offense and if the judge finds that the defendant did not intend to use the UAV to cause physical harm to another person or damage to school property. Before dismissing a charge, the judge must issue the defendant a warning and refer the defendant to an educational program on UAV safety and aviation laws. The duration and contents of the educational program must be established by the Director of Transportation.⁶

² R.C. 4561.50(E).

³ R.C. 4561.54(E).

⁴ R.C. 4561.54(B).

⁵ R.C. 4561.54(C).

⁶ R.C. 4561.54(D).

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	11-18-25

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