



STATE SENATOR

Eric Wimberger

DISTRICT 30

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Tuesday, September 5, 2023

Testimony on Senate Bill 111

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard and committee members for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 111 which extends the definition of "strip search" to include searches that would require a student to strip down to their underwear.

Currently, it is a Class B misdemeanor for a school district official or employee to "strip search" a student to the extent that their private areas are exposed. However, the statute does not protect students from being subjected to searches that strip them down to their underwear – as was the case for six teenage girls accused of having vape pens in the Suring School District last year.

This common-sense bill protects our youth and ensures student safety and dignity by extending the definition of "strip search" to include searches that would require a student to strip down their underwear. This bill makes no changes to law enforcement's authority to conduct searches.

Our schools are supposed to be a safe and protective environment; there is no reason that a school official should have broader authority to strip search than a law enforcement official.

This bill has been reviewed and supported by the Oconto County Sheriff and CESA leadership involved in the Suring School District case. Although that case generated awareness of this issue, the statutory change will benefit and protect all Wisconsin students.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony.

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DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

September 5, 2023

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety on Senate Bill 111

Chairman Wanggaard and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of Senate Bill 111, a bipartisan bill relating to the definition of "strip search" as it pertains to searches performed by school personnel on students.

Members may recall an alarming incident that occurred at the Suring School District in January of last year, where six teenage girls (ages 14-17) were ordered by a school official to remove their clothing down to their bra and underwear and were subjected to inspection by the school official. This strip search was allegedly performed for the purpose of finding a nicotine vape pen. According to court and law enforcement reports, neither the girls' parents nor law enforcement were informed nor present at the time of the strip search.

While, as you can imagine, parents and community members demanded recourse for this action, the Oconto County District Attorney and law enforcement were unable to charge and convict the school official for performing the strip search because current law doesn't prohibit such a search by school officials.

Under current law it is a Class B misdemeanor for a school district official or employee to "strip search" a student to the extent that their private areas are exposed, the statute stops short of protecting students from being ordered to strip down to their underwear. This bill extends the definition of "strip search" to include searches that would require a student to strip down to their underwear. This bill makes no changes to law enforcement's authority to conduct necessary searches during the course of an official investigation.

This is a common-sense update to our statutes to ensure the safety and dignity of our kids. While the Suring School District situation generated awareness of this issue, the value and impact of this bill will benefit and protect all of the students of Wisconsin.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of SB 111. I encourage you to join me in supporting this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Steffen", is written over a horizontal line.

David Steffen
4th Assembly District