

Testimony – SB3

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee: My name is Christopher Vanghele. I am the Chief of Police for the Town of Plainville and have been a police officer for 31 years. I am testifying in opposition to Section 4 of S.B. 3 which bans our department from purchasing and using drones made in China. Simply put, this bill will take life-saving tools away from our department and significantly hamper our ability to do our jobs and protect the public. It will place officers in unnecessary, life-imperiling danger.

Our department has operated a drone program for the last several years. We use drones for a number of different reasons, from trying to locate persons suffering from Alzheimer's who have wandered off into wooded areas, locating bodies of injured persons in areas where the heat signature of their bodies can be picked up immediately by our drones infra-red technology allowing us to locate them quickly to save their lives, to locating criminals who run from us and pose a danger to our community and as a valuable tool that acts as our eyes and ears in extremely dangerous, life threatening situations in which the knowledge of where a suspect is and whether or not they are armed can save our officers' lives but also that of the suspect and innocent bystanders and victims.

We have used drones successfully in two recent incidents where our SWAT team was called out for a barricaded subject with a firearm that they had actually fired. In both of these situations, drones were deployed around the home of the subject and the drones were able to feed live images back to the SWAT officers, showing where the subject was, what they were doing, what state they were in and whether or not they were currently armed. This information allowed officers the intelligence they needed to go into these residences at just the right moment, so that no one was injured and that the subject could be taken into custody. Just last week we used the drone to search a heavily wooded area where a vehicle went off the road and down a cliff into a heavily wooded area. Using the drone to search for an injured person is common-place and saves lives.

Our department uses Chinese-made drones or drones with parts made in China because they are the best and widely available. They allow us to do our jobs in a way we were not able to do before.

We have at least \$ 20,000 of taxpayer money invested in drones that will be grounded by this bill, and thousands more invested in related program expenses. One drone in particular was just purchased a few months ago.

We understand this bill is intended to address cybersecurity concerns. Just like with any other device connected to the internet, we take appropriate steps to mitigate those threats. Our drones do not have cellphone capability and other than useless data about its flight pattern that is stored in the cloud, there is no other viable information that can be extracted from our drone flights.

If this bill passes we will no longer be able to provide the life-saving services that this technology now affords us. Ask yourself this question...If it was one of my family members that

was lost in the woods, would I care if the technology that the police department used to find my loved one was manufactured in China?

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.