This is to submit a written comment in opposition to HB 334 now pending before the Senate.

This bill is plainly unconstitutional as it violates my 1st Amendment right to freedom of religion. This bill would either force guns into houses of worship, or, make the members of our church post signs banning guns. Such a sign would intrude on the peaceful atmosphere of a house of worship and inhibit our efforts to be a peaceful presence in our community. Signs such as these would go as far as to strike fear into the hearts of attendees by reminding them of how destructive our society has become. There is also the real concern that the signs could make churches targets of gun violence, the signs basically advertise the church is a “soft target.”

This law strips the decision of the role of guns in the church from the church and places the decision of the role of guns into the hands of virtually anyone in society. This comes close, if not crosses, the line of the very definition of my right as a citizen.

In Matthew 26:52, Jesus rebuked the Apostle Peter for drawing his sword and told him to put it away. He then explained, “for all who take the sword will parish by the sword.” As Christians we are entitled to follow this teaching of Jesus Christ and pursue a peaceful life. Under present law, we can do so, and if others live in constant fear and wish to attend a church where they can all carry guns, under present law they can likewise do so.

Finally, there is a practical question that MUST be addressed: Has anyone performed a cost benefit analysis of this bill through insurance, especially liability coverage, to find if church liability rates will rise? Most responsible churches carry liability coverage, and the rates for that policy only rise. I cannot believe, once my insurance company discovers we have no recourse to prevent guns into our houses of worship, our rates will rise more.

I ask you to please leave the law as it is and vote against this bill.