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REPRESENTATIVE JOHN COGHILL

Sponsor Statement for HB 85 **Assault of School Employees**

Parents have always sent their children to school feeling their children are in the safest place they could be when away from home. Because of acts of violence in public schools around the country in recent years, the safety of a child or a school employee in the school environment has increasingly been questioned.

On his School Safety Resource Site on the Internet, Senator Robert Byrd states:

“These acts are not limited to specific geographic regions or family backgrounds, nor do they have a single catalyst. Those who have committed such heinous acts have done so for different reasons, at different times, in different schools. But these acts of school violence have at least one thing in common-- they have spurred all of us to take a closer look at what can be done to better protect children at school.

Protecting our children is not simply a matter of public policy. It is a matter of strengthening basic values, of teaching children right from wrong, of instilling in them respect for others. We each have a responsibility to work to end youth violence and to keep schools safe for children and for those who teach them.” Part of reassuring safety in the schools is assuring the safety of all school employees who facilitate that safe environment.”

HB 85 amends state statutes to allow for a judge to increase the imprisonment of a person who knowingly assaults a school employee during or because of the exercise of the school employee’s duties. I believe an aggravating factor in sentencing will instill in children and their parents respect for others, especially employees of the schools they attend.