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Ohio lawmakers listen to pros, cons about school spanking ban

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COLUMBUS -- Corporal punishment is ineffective in dealing with discipline issues and inhumane for the children who are targeted, proponents of a school spanking ban told lawmakers this week.

"We cannot hit our employees, our spouses, our neighbors or even our neighbors' dogs," said Nadine Block, executive director of the Center for Effective Discipline. "Paddling is used disproportionately on children with disabilities, minorities, boys and poor children. It is a black mark against our state that we have not banned this practice."

Block testified before the Ohio House's education committee on House Bill 26, which would prohibit paddling in schools. The proposed legislation is sponsored by Rep. Brian Williams, a Democrat from the Akron area.

Williams sponsored comparable bipartisan legislation last session that did not make it through the legislative process. It appears that the bill will fare better this session, as Gov. Ted Strickland has included a corporal punishment ban in schools in his executive budget proposal.

A limited ban on corporal punishment in schools has been in effect in Ohio since 1994, and districts that want to continue to use the practice have to follow certain procedures in order to do so. During the 2007-08 school year, six districts reported 110 paddlings of students.

"Most Ohioans under 30 haven't seen a paddle," Block said.

"It was once a popular punishment. In 1984, more than 68,000 school children [in Ohio were paddled]. Many of them were hit multiple times."

But not all groups agree with the ban. Keith Hamblen, a pastor from Lima and director of the Buckeye Christian School Association, asked that the bill be amended to allow parents to decide whether paddling should be used on their children in schools.

"For a child to learn that lying and stealing and disobedience are wrong from his or her youth through some well-timed and love-motivated spanking is good," he said.

"That love-motivated spanking produces benefits in those being spanked is something I think that a number in this room would testify in agreement."