

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1224

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Civil Rights & Judiciary

**Title:** An act relating to spring blade knives.

**Brief Description:** Concerning spring blade knives.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Chambers, Chapman, Jacobsen, Walen, McCaslin, Ybarra, Sutherland, Griffey, Chase and Dent.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Civil Rights & Judiciary: 1/18/22, 2/1/22 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Repeals the dangerous weapon statute's general restrictions on spring blade knives and related exceptions.
- Maintains existing restrictions on spring blade knives in specified settings.
- Modifies the statute governing warrantless arrests in schools to cover possession of spring blade knives, as well as stun guns and other electric shock weapons.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS & JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Simmons, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Gilday, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Abbarno, Entenman, Goodman, Kirby, Peterson, Thai, Walen and Ybarra.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Davis, Orwall and Valdez.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Graham, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Klippert.

**Staff:** John Burzynski (786-7133).

**Background:**

General Restrictions on Spring Blade Knives.

The dangerous weapon statute prohibits manufacturing, selling, disposing, or possessing spring blade knives, slung shots, sand clubs, and metal knuckles, and further prohibits furtively carrying with intent to conceal any dagger, dirk, pistol, or other dangerous weapons. These restrictions do not apply to the possession or use of spring blade knives by law enforcement officers, firefighter or rescue members, and military members while engaged in specified activities, and specified instances of manufacture, sale, transport, transfer, distribution, and possession of spring blade knives in connection with law enforcement agencies, firefighter or rescue agencies, and military service.

Place-based Restrictions on Specified Weapons.

Washington restricts specified weapons, including spring blade knives, in schools, childcare centers, jails, public mental health facilities, liquor and cannabis establishments, and commercial service airports. While spring blade knives are not expressly listed as a prohibited weapon in these statutes, the restrictions apply to weapons identified in the dangerous weapon statute, which includes spring blade knives.

Warrantless Arrest.

A police officer who has probable cause to believe a person has committed or is committing a felony is authorized to arrest such person without a warrant. Generally, a police officer may arrest a person without a warrant for committing a misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor only when the offense is committed in the officer's presence, subject to certain exceptions. One such exception authorizes a police officer to make an arrest when the officer has probable cause to believe a person illegally possesses or illegally has possessed a firearm or other dangerous weapon in a school. The authorizing statute provides that "dangerous weapon" means the weapons identified in the dangerous weapon statute and certain weapons identified in the statute restricting weapons in schools, including nun-chu-ka sticks, throwing stars, and air guns. While stun guns and other electric shock weapons are also restricted weapons in schools, they are not covered by the warrantless arrest statute.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

Repealed Restrictions on Spring Blade Knives.

The dangerous weapon statute's general restriction on manufacturing, selling, disposing, or possessing spring blade knives is repealed. Additionally, spring blade knives are deemed not to constitute a dangerous weapon for purposes of Washington's restriction on furtively

carrying with intent to conceal a dangerous weapon. The definition of "spring blade knife" in the dangerous weapon statute is retained.

The exceptions to the dangerous weapon statute for spring blade knives possessed or used by law enforcement officers, firefighter or rescue members, and military members, and other specified exceptions for spring blade knives, are repealed.

Retained Restrictions on Spring Blade Knives.

Statutes that incorporate weapons listed in the dangerous weapon statute are revised to expressly list spring blade knives as a prohibited weapon to maintain current restrictions on spring blade knives in schools, childcare centers, jails, public mental health facilities, liquor and cannabis establishments, and commercial service airports.

Warrantless Arrest.

The warrantless arrest statute is revised to cover in-school possession of spring blade knives, as well as stun guns and other electric shock weapons, by expanding the list of cited subsections in the statute restricting weapons in schools.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill makes the following revisions to the underlying bill:

- amends the statutes governing possession and storage of weapons in childcare facilities by expressly listing spring blades knives as covered weapons;
- amends the statute governing warrantless arrests of individuals possessing a weapon in a school to cover additional weapons identified in the statute restricting possession of certain weapons in schools, including spring blade knives as well as stun guns and other electric shock weapons;
- makes technical corrections, updating section 4 of the bill to incorporate changes made to RCW 9.41.300 that were enacted during the 2021 session; and
- sets an effective date of July 1, 2022.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2022.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) There are great manufacturers of spring blade knives in Washington, who will benefit if they are allowed to sell spring blade knives to the public. Washington manufacturers find it difficult to compete with out-of-state knife manufacturers because they cannot currently sell spring blade knives in Washington.

This bill has broad support. Spring blade knife restrictions are disproportionately used by police to target people of color. This is a criminal justice reform issue. Washington is the last western state to have a complete ban on spring blade knives. To date, 15 other states have repealed similar bans, and have seen no increase in knife crime. People should not have to fear arrest for use of a spring blade knife. This bill would not allow spring blade knives to be possessed in schools.

Spring blade knives have a bad reputation as a result of hyperbolic press and movies. How a knife opens is not a factor in whether it is used to commit crimes. Kitchen knives are the most common knife weapon. Spring blade knives are expensive and not a weapon-of-choice for criminals. Spring blade knives are a life-saving tool and, in reality, are safer than conventional knives in some settings, such as the trades and in construction, where spring blade knives allow a user to keep a free hand. Spring blade knives are also helpful to those who have disabilities, or who are elderly, and can benefit from being able to quickly deploy a knife to save their life or perform a job.

Knives are one of the oldest technologies and played a role in allowing humans to obtain more protein and develop larger brains.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Kelly Chambers, prime sponsor; Todd Rathner, Knife Rights; and Mike Vellekamp, V Nives.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.