

Testimony on House Bill 228
Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee
Rep. Kristina Roegner, Chair
Rep. John Becker, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Lisa Voigt

My name is Lisa Voigt and I am a professor of Spanish and Portuguese at The Ohio State University. Thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony on House Bill 228. Because I am out of town on May 22, I will be unable to present it in person.

I write as a concerned private citizen, mother, and professor at Ohio State because I believe many provisions in HB 228 would put me, my family, my students, and all Ohioans at greater risk of gun violence. I began following Ohio's gun legislation after the passage of the bill in December 2016 permitting universities (among other previously gun-free zones such as daycares) to allow guns on campus. I am grateful that Ohio State continues to prohibit firearms on campus, but my concern about Ohio's gun legislation was further increased after learning of a student of mine who had a psychotic break, impulsively purchased a weapon, and made alarming comments to friends about how he might use it, which I discovered after the semester was over. I should say that I am not a gun owner and did not grow up in a household with firearms, even though I grew up in a rural area of Wisconsin—where, like Ohio, there are strong gun ownership and hunting traditions—because my grandfather was shot in the face during a hunting accident and lost his sight in one eye. This accident, of course, is not remotely similar to the suffering of the families of the Sandy Hook and Las Vegas and Parkland and Santa Fe victims and countless others, but it is a reminder that guns, even in the hands of “good guys,” are dangerous and can have devastating consequences.

Two provisions in the bill particularly concern me: Stand Your Ground and the provision to reduce penalties on concealed carry without a permit. As a professor and researcher, I know that we can understand and find solutions to our problems through research and study, and few problems are crying out for solutions more than the epidemic of gun violence that kills 96 Americans every day, far more than any comparable country. Because many states passed Stand Your Ground laws over a relatively short period of time, the research about its impact has been done and we should learn from it. I was easily able to access several studies through google searches. A 2012 study showed that in the 21 states that passed Stand Your Ground laws between 2000 and 2010, there was no evidence that crime was deterred, and homicides increased by 8% (<http://www.nber.org/papers/w18134.pdf>). Another found that “Stand Your Ground laws are associated with a significant increase in the number of homicides among whites, especially white males,” as well as a “significant increase in emergency room visits and hospital discharges related to firearm inflicted injuries” (<http://www.nber.org/papers/w18187>). A study of Florida homicides following the passage of Stand Your Ground in 2005 found an “abrupt and sustained increase in the monthly homicide rate of 24.4% and in the rate of homicide by firearm of 31.6%” (<https://crimeresearch.org/wp->

<content/uploads/2016/11/loi160090.pdf>). I also trust the perspective of law enforcement officials on this issue. At one of the hearings on HB 228, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police testified that “There are strong public policies for preserving the sanctity of life on one hand, and on the other hand, for allowing one to protect himself from harm. Allowing citizens to ‘stand-your-ground’ upsets this balance. It allows the killing of an individual in certain situations where the death could have been avoided [...]. Remove the duty to retreat, and you remove a legal constraint that will allow pride, passion, and ego to prevail over common sense.”

I am also concerned about this bill’s effective removal of another legal constraint: the CCW permit. Ohioans overwhelmingly support requiring a permit to carry a concealed weapon—as many as 90% of Ohio voters, according to a March 2016 survey (Survey USA). I recently heard Dr. Cassandra Crifasi, a gun policy researcher and gun owner who shoots for sport, speak at the Glenn School of Public Affairs at OSU. She mentioned her research on the repeal of Missouri’s permit-to-purchase handgun law in 2007, which resulted in a 23% increase in homicides (<https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-gun-policy-and-research/pdfs/effects-of-missouris-repeal-of-its-handgun-purchaser-licensing-law-on-homicides.pdf>). She clearly stated that the most effective policy to reduce gun violence is strong permitting requirements. Although I understand that this bill does not remove the permit requirement altogether, it does effectively eliminate the incentive for compliance by reducing the penalty to a minor misdemeanor. As Colonel Paul A. Pride of the Ohio State Highway Patrol testified in a hearing on SB 180, the companion bill to HB 228, this provision “removes all incentive for individuals to go through the permitting process, and it shields the criminal element—those who cannot pass a background check—from a custodial arrest.” Louis Tobin, executive director of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, called this “protection for the not so law-abiding” in his column opposing the bill in the *Dispatch* on April 22, 2018. I would add that otherwise law-abiding individuals, like the student I mentioned earlier, would be more likely to carry weapons without a permit—and, because of impulsive decisions, perceived threats, or mental health crises, *use* them—should this bill be enacted.

In the wake of yet another tragic school shooting last week in Texas, I hope your committee will take the time to study the research and, like me, come to the conclusion that HB 228 would in no way contribute to the decrease in gun violence and gun deaths that we all seek. On the contrary, it would increase them, as we can see clearly from what has happened in other states with similar legislation. I urge you to oppose this law, for the safety of all Ohioans.

Respectfully submitted,



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