

My name is Gail Hamer. I live in Lakewood, OH and I am a volunteer with the Cleveland Chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. I am a domestic violence survivor. I am here in support of HB585, and believe it will help keep women and survivors safe.

My story is a common one. While still in high school, my boyfriend slapped me during an argument. I think he was as shocked by his action as I was. He apologized and swore it would never happen again; I believed him and forgave him.

In 1970, we got married. The physical violence only escalated: holding me up against a wall, slapping, pushing, punching and once, when I was pregnant, pushing me down a short flight of stairs. During one vicious beating, he choked me until I nearly lost consciousness and then threw me to the ground. As I was falling, I had to contort my body to keep from landing on my one-year old son. I never knew what might set him off. One morning during an argument, he took his hunting rifle from the closet, held it to my head, and said, "I could kill you, you know".

To this day, I don't know why he didn't pull the trigger. Eventually, he left the house and I called the police. Back in the 70's, they wouldn't even arrest him; much less remove the gun from our home. When I asked if I had to be bloodied and laying on the ground in order for them to do something ~ anything~ the response was, "Pretty much". Forty plus years later, that still rings in my head. I was lucky; my children and I got out alive. But, the traumatic arthritis in my neck, the psychological scars and the terror are still with me.

Laws were much different back in 70's, as was the way we treated domestic abusers and the people they terrorized. But domestic violence still remains a real danger; women, and sometimes their precious children, are dying by gunfire. Today we have a chance to make even more improvements to our laws here in Ohio. I am here today to urge you to pass HB 585

In an average month, 50 American women are shot to death by intimate partners, and many more are injured. The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it five times more likely that a woman will be killed. In fact, nearly 2 out of 5 Ohio women report experiencing some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime. According to the FBI data, 200 Ohio residents were killed in intimate partner violence between 2012 to 2016. Guns are the weapon of choice for domestic abusers. In Ohio, firearms are used in the clear majority – 55 percent – of intimate partner violence fatalities. Nearly 90 percent of the intimate partner violence homicide victims were females.

Federal law prohibits abusers convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence crimes and abusers subject to final domestic violence restraining orders from possessing firearms. Most states have similar laws that empower state law enforcement to help keep guns out of the hands of these known domestic abusers, but Ohio does not.

HB 585 would bring Ohio in line with federal law by prohibiting people who have been convicted of misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence and those subject to active domestic violence restraining orders from possessing firearms, giving state law enforcement important tools to protect victims and keep guns away from domestic abusers. This bill would also create a life-saving Red Flag law in Ohio. This would enable families and law enforcement to ask courts to temporarily restrict a person's access to guns if they're a risk of harming themselves or others. . Eight states, most recently Maryland, Florida, and Vermont, have passed Red

Flag Laws and bills to create red flag laws have been active in at least 29 states and D.C. this year. This is not a partisan issue nor is it a controversial one. Ohio has a chance to be a leader in gun violence prevention by enacting this law.

It is so encouraging that we are here today to advocate for a life-saving gun violence prevention bill. I am hopeful that we are finally moving in the right direction in Ohio to increase public safety and decrease the epidemic of gun violence. While no one law is going to solve this complex problem, HB 585 would bring us two big steps forward in our efforts to keep all Ohionas safe. Thank you for your time and consideration.