

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

Testimony in Support of HB 585

Responding to Gun Violence

May 16, 2018

Chairperson Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes and members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Jim Tobin. I am an associate director with the Catholic Conference of Ohio. We represent the Catholic Bishops of Ohio regarding public policy matters. The Conference was part of the diverse work group that sought consensus on ways to address gun violence. We commend the Governor and his staff for convening this group. Listening to persons advocating differing views on guns was a helpful process. We particularly commend Representative Henne for his leadership in sponsoring HB 585.

From my perspective, this bill is not a direct response to any one specific incidence of gun violence, but an overall response to possible points of consensus that may help to curb gun violence in general. The work group looked at a wide number of possible responses. The provisions found in HB 585 represent the concepts on which there was agreement.

There were four areas of general agreement:

The first was respect for the Second Amendment. Our intent was to reflect reasonable responses within the framework of the Second Amendment.

The second was to ensure that the Ohio entities that are required to submit information to the NICS system provide all the proper information in a timely manner. This would include records that should be added and records that should be removed.

The third was the creation and implementation of an “extreme risk protection order”. This would be a temporary order where close family members and law enforcement could petition the court to have a

person temporarily relinquish his/her guns. We asked for the burden documenting the need to be high -- clear and convincing evidence, and for due process be strong.

Having listened to the questions raised during sponsor testimony, I trust that the combined wisdom and expertise among the sponsor, committee members, caucuses and interested parties will be able to tweak the specifics of such a temporary protection order so as to reasonably ensure that such a provision is not abused.

The fourth was to mirror federal law whenever possible. It is our understanding that mostly due to limited resources, the ATF is often unable to respond quickly to Ohio gun violations. Allowing Ohio law to address this area should help deter and punish violators. In this area the work group sought federal reciprocity in matters such as banning armor-piercing ammunition and more severely punishing individuals who make federally defined "strawman" purchases.

In a recent statement, the Catholic Bishops of Ohio urged Ohio's elected leaders to adopt prudent policies to help curb gun violence. They exhorted that "now is the time for action. Now is the time to promote the culture of life."

The Bishops stated: "We urge open and civil discourse that will result in the enactment of bipartisan reforms. We pray that Ohio's leaders will set aside political agendas and achieve solutions that promote the common good and safety of all people. We believe just solutions can be found that will not violate the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution".

We urge your support for HB 585.