



**House State and Local Government Committee
Proponent Testimony
HB 585
Melissa Cropper, President
Ohio Federation of Teachers
May 16, 2018**

Chairwoman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, I am Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers and paraprofessionals in rural and urban school districts across the state. I am pleased to testify in support of HB 585.

On February 14, 2018, the students and teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida had their lives changed forever by a shooting that killed seventeen people. Unfortunately, this is a tragedy that has happened too many times in our schools – Columbine, Sandy Hook, Chardon, and Success Tech Academy where OFT members teach. After each of these shootings, there is always this feeling that maybe now something will change, yet since the school shootings in Newtown in 2012, there have been at least 1,650 mass shootings, with at least 1,902 people killed and 6,970 wounded.

This year at our state convention, which happened just two weeks after the Parkland shootings, we had in-depth discussions about how we want the gun violence issue to be addressed. With membership stretching across the state and in rural and urban areas, we had varying opinions on the actions that we expect to be taken. At the heart of our discussion though was always the deep-seated common understanding that something needs to change – that we need to come together around solutions that will save the lives of children and their families because at the end of the day, though it has been the school shootings that has jarred our senses, the reality is that many of our students live in dangerous situations every day. Our concern is not only about how gun violence in schools is impacting the learning environment and putting students and staff in jeopardy, but also how gun violence is endangering students outside of school and creating childhood trauma that impacts learning.

We were able to come together to find common ground and pass a resolution that contains many of the same concepts as those in HB585 such as:

- Better background checks
- Emergency protection orders
- Strengthening Ohio's prohibition against "strawman" purchases

Though HB 585 does not address every piece that we put into our resolution, we support the steps it takes and believe that it has the potential to make a difference. We applaud the results of the Governor's advisory group and strongly urge you to pass this bill.

I will be glad to answer any questions.