

Thank you to Chair Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, and Ranking Member Holmes, and the rest of the committee for reading my testimony in support of House Bill 585. My name is Sarah Mouncey.

This bill would help our local law enforcement by giving them the tools to act when they find a convicted Domestic Violence Offender in possession of a gun. Currently, they have no local or state recourse in these situations and this bill would remedy that problem. This bill would also give family members and law enforcement who identify someone who has made threats to their own life or the lives of other a tool to prevent these individuals from having access to guns. We know that in the case of the Parkland shooter, a Red Flag Law like this may have prevented 17 innocent lives from being lost that day.

But a Red Flag Law also protects me and directly affects my family. In 2004 I was suicidal and diagnosed with moderate depression. Since then I have sought treatment and it has been determined that for me, this is a chronic illness for which I will always have to be under the care of a doctor. However, even with treatment, my depression has hills and valleys and there is always the possibility of my brain telling me that the world is better off without me. Because of my treatment, I know that this is a lie and know that in that situation that I should tell my husband and my doctor. This Red Flag Law is a tool that my husband can use to keep me safe and prevent me from succumbing to those lies. The legislation will allow him to petition the court to prevent me from purchasing a gun that could instantly take my life and change the lives of all of my family and friends. We know that suicide attempts with a gun are fatal 90% of the time while suicide attempts by other methods are NOT fatal 90% of the time.

Many say, well, we have laws that allow people to be given treatment and allow families to have suicidal relatives to be “committed” and that is helpful. However, anyone who has been through treatment for mental health knows that it takes weeks for the body to adjust to medication. Those weeks are often spent fighting with your brain and body to keep going and the thoughts may lessen but they don’t go away. When a person chooses to act on their thoughts, we know that on average there is a ten minute “moment of crisis” and if a person can get through that, they are likely to live. If there are guns present in that “moment of crisis”, it can be fatal.

I urge this committee to pass HB 585 to protect Ohio’s vulnerable citizens who are fighting with mental illness every day and to give their loved ones an important tool to keep them alive.