

Jeffrey E Cline
2056 Farmbrook Dr.
Mansfield, OH 44904
jeckrc@yahoo.com
419-571-3903

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Mr. Chairman and members of the House Federalism Committee, thank you for hearing testimony in support of HB 178.

I was in contact with Representative Romanchuk's office late last year asking for help in addressing an issue that is important to me concerning the right to carry a "less than lethal" weapon for self-defense and the defense of my family. Specifically, I had asked for him to propose legislation that would change the Concealed Handgun License to allow for the carry of "concealed weapons", to include any knife or device that would be carried for self-defense. The language contained in HB 178 is exactly what I was looking for.

The laws in the State of Ohio are vague when it comes to the carry of knives or other items that may be used for self-defense. Some of the court rulings and legal opinions that I have seen suggest that if a knife or other device is carried for the purpose of self-defense or if it has certain characteristics, it would be considered a deadly weapon and cannot be legally carried concealed or openly. Disarming the law-abiding citizens in this manner almost ensures that they will be a victim if confronted by a deadly attacker.

I travel through 4 different counties and numerous cities on a daily basis. Many cities have local ordinances that specify the maximum blade length that is permitted to be lawfully carried when carried openly and some communities prohibit the carry of an electronic stun devices. HB 178 would afford all law-abiding citizens the ability to carry defensive tools for their own protection and the protection of their families, without the fear of running afoul of the law.

HB 178 would allow law-abiding citizens the ability to exercise their right to bear arms for their defense and security as recognized by the Articles to the United States Constitution and the Ohio Constitution. It is time for Ohio to fully recognize our civil rights. I ask for your support for HB 178.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.