

May 22, 2019

Re: Opposition to HB 178, the “Permitless Carry” Bill

Dear Mr. Becker and members of the committee,

I am Annie Volker. I am sixteen years old and the co-President of Grandview Heights High School’s chapter of Students Demand Action. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you. I am here today to tell you that I oppose HB 178, and I urge you and your colleagues to do the same and vote against this bill. HB 178 will change Ohio for the worse. If we enact a permitless carry law, certain violent criminals, teenagers, and people without any gun safety training will be able to carry hidden, loaded handguns in public. Our police officers, our streets, our schools, and our communities will not be safe. Our way of life will not be the same.

In 2017, Missouri enacted a permitless carry law. In one year, St. Louis experienced a 25% increase in the rate of aggravated assaults involving firearms. That is 484 more incidents of gun violence. Many people were impacted by Missouri’s decision, and similar results arose in other places when these laws were enacted. Not only Missouri but other states that have enacted permitless carry laws have seen a substantial increase in firearm violence. We cannot expect Ohio to be any different. Gun violence will rise as a result of this bill, and every one of you here should be aware of the consequences that will come from your vote.

I am fortunate to live in a community where gun violence is rare, but I am here as a high school student because this will affect my future. I do not want to be burdened by the ever present threat of gun violence. The pain and hurting experience after gun violence are indescribable, and imagining such an increase makes me sick to my stomach. Not one more person should go through this, yet legislation like this continues to be considered.

I walk into my school everyday with the fear that I will not walk out. The wasted time spent on lockdown drills and protocol takes a toll on students. The locked doors and covered windows are constant reminders of what could happen to us. We experience anxiety and are distracted from our studies. This bill is against children and students like me. It puts all of us at unnecessary risk, and is an action of great consequence.

I want a safe future for myself and others, and I would like the Ohio General Assembly to be mindful of this when voting. Thank you.