

Testimony on House Bill 178
House Federalism Committee
Rep. John Becker, Chair
Rep. Reggie Stoltzfus, Vice Chair
Rep. Adam C. Miller, Ranking Member

Submitted by: Dirk Cantrell

Chair Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on House Bill 178. My name is Dirk Cantrell, and I am speaking to you today as a concerned private citizen. I believe many provisions in HB 178 would put me, my family, and all Ohioans at greater risk of gun violence.

My personal life has been materially impacted by gun violence. My father murdered a man using a gun that resulted in his incarceration and separation from our home while I and my two brothers struggled through our teen years. My son just last year committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. These incidents have left me with an abiding concern for the safe use of guns.

I believe that your proposed action will lower the bar for who may carry hidden handguns in public and potentially let violent criminals, teenagers, and people with no safety training to legally carry in crowded town centers and on city streets. States that pass permitless carry see a substantial increase in gun violence. This dangerous legislation ignores the 88 percent of Americans who support requiring safety training, a clean criminal record and no history of mental illness in order to carry a concealed handgun in public.

In the vast majority of US states, a person must have a permit to carry a loaded, concealed handgun in public. These laws ensure that core public safety standards are preserved when people carry guns in public places. Permitless carry bills would repeal these important public safety laws, allowing people to carry concealed guns in public without a permit or safety training.

In 2003, Alaska became the first state to enact permitless carry legislation. Aggravated assaults committed with a firearm have increased incrementally since the law went into effect. Since 2003, the rate of aggravated assaults committed with a firearm in the state increased by 82 percent by 2017. That increase represents 526 more gun-related aggravated assaults committed in 2017 than in 2003.

Since Arizona enacted permitless carry legislation in 2010, the rate of aggravated assaults committed with a firearm in the state increased by 39 percent by 2017. That increase represents 1,797 more gunrelated aggravated assaults committed in 2017 than in 2010.

After Missouri passed a permitless carry bill in January 2017, the city of St. Louis experienced a nearly 25 percent increase in the rate of aggravated assaults with a gun in 2017 compared to 2016. That represents 484 more gun-related aggravated assaults in 2017 than in 2016.

I again point out that permitless carry dramatically lowers the bar for who can carry a concealed handgun in public—to include in some cases violent criminals and weapons offenders, teenagers, and people who have no firearm training.

I would like to conclude my testimony by stating that our government has an obligation to keep its citizens safe, and I strongly believe that permitless carry will compromise our safety and therefore should not become law in our state and community. This is the very first time that I have offered testimony in opposition to proposed legislation, and I do so only now because I believe this to be so detrimental to our citizens' safety.