



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
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Testimony on House Bill 178
Rosie Craig, League of Women Voters of Ohio – Gun Control Specialist
House Federalism Committee
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Chair Becker, Vice Chair Stolfus, Ranking Member Miller. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 178. My name is Rosie Craig and I am the Gun Control Specialist for the League of Women Voters of Ohio. I am here today to speak in opposition to HB 178. The League of Women Voters believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major safety threat to its citizens.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio has opposed legislation for Carry Concealed Handgun Licensing (CCW) since 2001, by a delegate vote at the LWV Ohio state convention. I personally attended proponent and opponent testimony prior to the establishment of the CCW licensing system in 2004 as well as subsequent CCW legislation. From the onset, proponents claimed that the establishment of CCW in Ohio would make Ohioans safer. Since then, Ohio legislation has significantly expand concealed and open carry gun rights. Record gun sales have meant that there are more guns than ever in personal ownership in Ohio. Yet now, Ohioans are less safe than ever from gun violence. According to the CDC, the number of deaths per year in Ohio has increased by 70 % since Ohio CCW was enacted. (1) Through out this 15 year period, proponent's of CCW have continued to claim that they needed more liberalized carry laws due to law enforcement's in ability to protect "them". Simultaneous to these claims - this legislature has continued to strip cities of tools and mechanisms to protect citizens through the preemption of home rule police powers in 2006, with even more preemption levied at municipalities as HB 228 was passed last December.

The veniality of this hypocrisy can cause one to wonder if largely rural legislators care little about Ohio cities. Do they honestly believe that gun violence in urban areas doesn't somehow affect rural constituents? In 2015, the economic cost of gun violence in Ohio topped 2.7 billion based on the measurable costs of health care costs, law enforcement

and criminal justice expenses, employer costs and lost income.(2) While this number is staggering, it actually understates the true cost of gun violence in Ohio as it does not incorporate other significant yet difficult to measure costs including lost business opportunities, lowered property values, and reductions in the tax base.

The same year CCW passed in Ohio, the Federal assault weapons ban was allowed to sunset. A diverting technical debate about the definition of an assault weapon over shadowed the deadly consequence of now unrestricted clip sizes. We also saw immunity legislation passed at both the state and federal level protecting gun trades people from lawsuit, despite blatantly careless trade practices such as a failure to secure weapons or irresponsible marketing strategies.

Now, this legislative body would have us throw out virtually all restrictive measures to those who wish to carry any weapon, concealed or openly so long as the “weapon” is not otherwise prohibited by federal law.

Proponents of these laws have been and continue to be absurd in their premise that law-abiding citizens carrying powerful weapons will somehow always be law abiding. “Law Abiding” is simply not a high enough standard for liberalizing our gun laws. Who is to know which of these law abiding citizens will develop ill intent! We have seen in Ohio and in the nation, a rise in the deadliness of mass shootings, both due to the clip size availability, and the lethality of the ammunition used. We have seen the rise in the number and deadliness of school shootings. We have seen the rise of domestic terrorism against certain ethnic, religious, and racial groups where an AR-15 rifle has been used execution style against innocent people. In these most high profile cases, the perpetrator was otherwise “law abiding” before he started to shoot people.

This law can only encourage domestic terrorism by people not yet in trouble with the law, recruited to violent ideals as grounds to shoot people for some fanatical cause. In such situations, even trained officers and coordinated law enforcement efforts can only mitigate the injury and loss of life once a perpetrator starts firing. Shamefully HB 178 is legislation that is “custom-made” for a rise in more racially motivated domestic disturbances.

Ohio’s “Concealed Hand-gun Carry Licensing System,” flawed as it is, would be eviscerated, particularly as to its ability to determine license suspensions and revocations. Worst of all, HB 178 would make legal for concealment, those deadly “assault-style” weapons like the AR-15 and other weapons of choice for mass shooters and domestic terrorists. This law would abandon the practice of requiring background checks and minimal firearms training for someone to carry a hidden but deadly “handgun.” In

changing the concealed carry law from “handgun” to “weapon,” those with ill intent could carry and hide any long gun, including those designed and built to accommodate large ammunition clips.

Since 2004, when the original CCW legislation was passed, more guns have flooded the market. Ohio laws preempting cities from using tools to fight gun crime have been passed and sadly, many more people in Ohio die each year from guns than they used to. Over the past 15 years, this legislative body has failed in its duty to protect its citizens because it has been unwilling to enact legislative measures to rein in perpetrators of gun violence *before* they start shooting. We need legislation for background checks on gun purchases, reducing clip size and prohibiting military style features on semi-automatic weapons. We need safe storage legislation requiring adults to keep guns away from minors who should not have them with legal liability consequences if they don't. This body should support the enactment of strong Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) laws which would allow through due process, the temporary removal of guns from the possession of demonstrably dangerous people. States with ERPO laws have seen reductions in completed gun suicides as well. (3)

With these trends and issues in consideration, I urge members of the committee to vote against this bill and to consider instead common-sense gun regulations which have reduced gun deaths in other states, like Massachusetts where the gun death rate is ¼ of what it is in Ohio.(4) Thank you for hearing my testimony. I will be happy to take any questions.

Footnotes:

- (1) In Ohio there were 934 gun deaths in 2003 and since CCW in 2004 that number has risen to 1589. *Center for Disease Control*
 - (2) <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/new-report-the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence-in-ohio/>
 - (3) American Psychiatric Association
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=2ahUKEwiXtNW-zJ3iAhXSna0KHcs7AJUQFjADegQIBRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.psychiatry.org%2Ffile%2520Library%2Fpsychiatrists%2Fdirectories%2FLibrary-and-Archive%2Fresource_documents%2F2018-Resource-Document-on-Risk-Based-Gun-Removal-Laws.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3GnDWb_w4e_exj5QLh-aP
- (Although their data are relatively limited, the authors conclude that Connecticut's law may prevent one suicide for every 10 to 20 gun removals, primarily by delaying access to firearms during a period of acute crisis.)

(4) <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/scorecard/#MA>