

May 20, 2019

Testimony in Opposition to HB 178

Dear Federalism Committee:

I am writing to you as I am very concerned about Ohio's House Bill 178, and wish to write you in opposition to it. I understand that this bill which is currently being considered in the Ohio House, would allow people over the age of 21 to carry hidden loaded weapons (including handguns, shotguns, and rifles) in public without a permit or license. This permit-less carry bill will essentially let people who have never handled a gun previously, to carry a hidden and loaded one in public. This idea sincerely worries me.

I am a social worker in my daily job. For over 30 years I have heard stories from women and men, who have shared their own stories of violence due to someone's use of firearms. Over the last 3-4 years, there has been a definite increase in the number of firearm-related injuries and deaths, which continue to be told to myself and my colleagues in the social work field. Many are in relation to Domestic Violence cases. As law enforcement officers also know, Domestic Violence cases are frequently the source of most physical violence to women and also to first responders. School social workers are also very concerned about the rise in the number of school shootings, which are evident on a weekly basis now in the news. In Cincinnati, the nearest large city to where I live, we had a shooting downtown at the 5th/3rd building last year. Lives were lost in this shooting. In my home county of Clermont this year, a police officer's life was lost due to a mentally ill person's use of a handgun. This happened not ten miles from my home. Gun violence is already happening every day, with increasing frequency. HB 178 will not provide any barriers to this – on the contrary, it will most likely increase the odds of more shootings.

Reports show that the concealed carry laws and trainings which are currently in place are more effective of at least slowing the current public trend of using guns in public places. Every person has the human right to live and be safe from gun violence. Passing laws like HB 178 will prove a step backward in protecting these rights. Ohio legislators have a duty to ensure that all Ohioans have the choice to practice their religion, go to their jobs, see their children go to schools, without worrying about the threat of gun violence in those same places.

I am very concerned - as a citizen and as a clinical social worker - that with the introduction of HB 178, Ohio legislators are considering a dangerous bill that removes the existing and critical safeguards on the conceal carry safeguards that minimize gun violence and decrease threats to public safety.

I want to share with you the case of a close friend who currently has a conceal-carry permit, who has told me that she has this to protect herself from 'other people out there who don't follow the law.' She is very conscientious and has done all the 'right' things including taking the conceal carry class and licensing her gun, to be able to protect herself. If this law were passed, it would

nullify all of her positive legal efforts to protect herself, as it would the thousands of other law-abiding citizens who have done the same.

Aside from the increased threat to public safety, HB 178 also would significantly weaken law enforcement officers' ability to protect the public. Evidence based reports show that more individuals carrying concealed loaded weapons in public heightens the likelihood of intentional and/or unintentional shootings. HB 178 would not only **remove** the requirement for a permit- (which mandates the completion of firearms training), it would eliminate notice requirements to law enforcement, and it will expand the category of weapons an individual may carry, while simultaneously stripping away security measures aimed at protecting the public. Too, the industry built up to provide conceal carry classes will now be rendered useless, since people will no longer 'have to' take the classes; and jobs will potentially be lost.

I see this as an untenable bill which will result in negative and dangerous consequences, and I do speak against it. I do hope that our elected officials in Ohio will make the educated, rational choice to vote against it. Thank you for your time and your consideration of my letter.

Most Sincerely,

Laura Osborn-Coffey, MSW