

Opponent Testimony on House Bill 178  
House Federalism Committee  
Michele Kaminsky on behalf of the National Council of Jewish Women/Cleveland  
Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Chairman John Becker, Vice Chair Stephen Huffman, and Ranking Minority Member Adam Miller:

My name is Michele Kaminsky and I am the President Elect for National Council of Jewish Women Cleveland (NCJW/CLE.) We are an organization of 90,000 members and supporters across the country and 2500 members and supporters in Ohio, dedicated to social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children and families. One of our focuses at NCJW/CLE is gun violence prevention. From our work at NCJW/Cleveland – and from my own personal experiences – this is an urgent matter.

The United States has higher rates of gun violence than any other developed nation in the world, with 33,000 individuals killed every year by guns. The proliferation of, and easy access to guns has resulted in an epidemic of gun violence – from deadly domestic abuse, to suicide, and to school shootings.

NCJW/CLE is strongly opposed to House Bill 178, which would allow almost anyone to carry a concealed deadly weapon without needing a license, and further, remove the duty to notify law enforcement that one is carrying a concealed firearm.

Allowing Ohioans to lawfully carry a concealed firearm without a license puts many lives at risk. I know this, because of my own experiences. I have a son who works as a police officer and a sister who suffers from mental illness.

As a mother of a police officer, I am terrified what this bill would mean for my son's safety. Under this bill, individuals with dangerous histories and those without firearms training would be allowed to carry loaded guns in public. As an officer, my son is pulling over cars all the time. I'm worried that with this bill passing, my son, in those split seconds before he approaches a car, would have no way of knowing whether the person he's pulling over has a gun, and whether they have a concealed carry card. This is a danger to both him and the people he's pulling over.

Additionally, as the sister of someone who suffers from mental illness, I am worried for the public's safety. Recently, my sister went to a local gun shop with the express purpose of buying a handgun. My sister suffers from major depression. She's been hospitalized dozens of times, sometimes for months at a time. Yet, gun stores do not have access to her medical record or history. I love my sister, but I don't know what would happen if she had access to a gun, let alone the ability to carry a concealed weapon without needing a permit. I worry for her safety, and also for the thousands others who wouldn't know she was carrying it, which this bill would allow.

More than 1,400 Ohio lives are lost each year due to gun violence. Governor Mike DeWine said when he was Ohio State Attorney General, “Licenses to carry concealed handguns are an important part of the responsible exercise of our fundamental rights.” Allowing people to carry a loaded handgun in public, without passing a background check – and without requiring law enforcement to know about it – puts Ohioans’ lives at risk.

For these reasons and more, NCJW/CLE urges legislators to oppose H.B. 178. Our lawmakers should not spend our state’s limited resources or taxpayers dollars defending a bill that puts our public welfare and safety in jeopardy.