

## 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: Lauren Squires

Chair Becker and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 178. My name is Lauren Squires, and I am speaking to you today as a concerned citizen, asking you to reject this bill. I live in Columbus, and I am a professor at The Ohio State University and a volunteer commissioner on my neighborhood Area Commission. I'm also a mother of a 4-year-old, and expect to be having another baby in three months.

My reason for opposing this bill is very simple: Guns are inherently deadly weapons. As such, I believe that their concealed carrying in public places should require documentation, training, and background checks. A permitted system like the one we have now in Ohio is not limiting any law-abiding person from carrying a gun, and so I do not understand what the purpose of this bill even is. It is well-established that the right to bear arms may and should be regulated: it is not an absolute right for anyone to carry a gun anywhere at any time for any purpose, as Scalia stated in the *Heller* opinion.<sup>1</sup> Requiring permits for people to concealed carry guns in public seeks to protect the rights of *all* Ohioans to live peaceably and safely, while respecting the Second Amendment.

This bill's intent must be to increase the number of guns being carried in public; at the same time, it would decrease the public's confidence that those who hold those guns have been vetted for them. This represents a great public safety concern. I simply do not want more lethal weapons carried in public, around my children, with less confidence about who is carrying them.

My son is 4 years old. He loves playing outside—riding his bike, climbing in the backyard, drawing with sidewalk chalk out front, and going to public parks, where he has more room to move and more challenges to take on. We live in a middle-class neighborhood near the campus of Ohio State. It's a mix of students, young and not-so-young professionals, artists, working families, and long-time residents, many of them retirees. Since we moved here in 2012, there have been several gun-related incidents in our neighborhood. Fortunately, few of these incidents have resulted in death, but we know that even a wayward bullet can kill. We love our neighborhood. But I am terrified that sometime, one of those uses of a gun is going to cross our path at exactly the wrong time, and it is going to be my kids, or my neighbor's kids, or my kid's classmates, who are going to be in the crossfire.

Guns kill people, and they hurt people. This is what they are intended to do, which is the very point of claiming that you need them for self-defense. Even when guns do not *hit* people, they *hurt* people—they traumatize people, families, schools, neighborhoods, and cities. We should not

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/dc-v-heller/>

be making it easier or more attractive for people with ill intent to carry a deadly weapon unbeknownst to those around them.

“An ever-increasing number of Ohioans are dying at the end of a gun.” That’s the sentence that begins a 2018 article in the *Columbus Dispatch*, about the rise in gun deaths in Ohio.<sup>2</sup> Since 2014, there have been over 3,000 deaths and over 7,000 injuries due to guns in Ohio. About 1 in 10 of those have involved children or teens.<sup>3</sup>

The data show that eliminating permits for concealed carry leads to increases in gun violence. We know this from Alaska, Arizona, and Missouri, all of which have passed permitless concealed carry in recent years.<sup>4</sup> We already have enough gun violence in Ohio. We do not need more.

I had to walk through a metal detector in order to enter the Statehouse. I would ask the committee whether it would be willing to forgo that metal detector and allow anyone with a gun to walk into this building carrying it, without making that known. Is this a place I’d want to bring my child, not knowing whether it was full of armed people or not—and not knowing that those who are armed have been trained and vetted for carrying their weapons? That is what this legislation asks ordinary Ohioans to be comfortable with when we take our kids to the park, ride our bikes with them to school, or walk around our neighborhoods. I am not comfortable with that. The stakes when we are dealing with guns are too high.

The vast majority of Americans across demographic groups and ideological positions strongly oppose permitless concealed carry—including those in the Midwest, Republicans, gun owners, and those with concealed carry permits.<sup>5</sup> As a representative from the Toledo Police Patrolmans Association said in his testimony last week, “This would allow John Doe on his 21st birthday to run right out and buy a gun and throw it in his pocket.”<sup>6</sup> Surely we want higher standards than that in Ohio.

Thank you for your time.

Lauren Squires  
Columbus

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20181211/ohios-gun-death-rate-rises-in-2017-to-highest-since-records-began-in-1999>

<sup>3</sup> <http://gunviolencearchive.org/congress/oh>

<sup>4</sup> <https://everytownresearch.org/permitless-carry/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://everytown.org/documents/2015/03/ccw-release-memo.pdf/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ohiohouse.gov/committee/federalism>