

Testimony on House Bill 178

Senate Government Oversight Committee

Rep. John Becker, Chair

Rep. Reggie Stoltzfus, Vice Chair

Rep. Adam C. Miller, Ranking Member

Submitted by: Valerie Cumming

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 Valerie Cumming, and I am speaking to you today as a concerned citizen, and also as an elected member of Westerville City Council. As you may recall, on February 10, 2018, two Westerville police officers responded to a domestic violence call, and were shot and killed in the line of duty. This was the darkest day our city has ever experienced. We are truly a community that has been touched, deeply and personally, by gun violence.

Last Tuesday, our Council by a vote of 6-1 passed Resolution No. 2019-18, “A Resolution in Opposition to House Bill 178 Eliminating Certain Concealed Carry Requirements and Urging the General Assembly to Provide Greater Local Ability to Enact Common Sense Local Gun Regulations.” We did this for several reasons. First, we were concerned that this legislation will eliminate licensing and background checks for those Ohioans wishing to conceal carry. Second, we were concerned that it will remove the current requirement for 8 hours of training, even though our police department has indicated that 8 hours of training is not nearly enough and that ideally, more should be added. Finally, we were concerned about the provision in the legislation that would make it so that those who choose to conceal carry would no longer be required to notify police officers of the presence of their gun during a traffic stop. All of this combined led us to believe that this legislation, if it passes, would threaten the safety of our first responders, as well as their ability to effectively do their job. Moreover, removing these common-sense gun safety regulations would also potentially threaten the safety of the citizens who work, live, and play in our community.

In Westerville, we believe that responsible gun ownership is possible with appropriate registration, licensing, storage, and training – all of which House Bill 178 discourages or

prohibits. We also believe that one of our primary responsibilities as local government officials is to preserve and protect the health and safety of our residents, our first responders, and those who visit our community. Our citizens look to us, their local government officials, for protection, just as we now look to you. Our city continues to mourn the loss of our police officers. We ask that you please consider the safety of all first responders as well as everyday citizens, and join Westerville in opposing House Bill 178.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Cumming

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