

House Federalism Committee

Honorable Rep. John Becker, Chair

Honorable Rep. Reggie Stoltzfus, Vice Chair

Honorable Rep. Adam C. Miller, Ranking Member

Public Testimony, HB 178 by Zane Jones (Resident of Columbus, Ohio)

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here this morning. I'm rising to speak in opposition to House Bill 178, the heart of which would, if passed, permit residents with zero firearms training to lawfully carry a concealed handgun in public.

I am the product of a lifetime spent around guns and a firm believer that a responsibility armed society makes us safer, stronger, and more mature. I'm also hunter, competitive shooter, NRA life member, CHL holder, and United States Marine.

Speaking from this experience beginning with the hunter safety course I attended at a young age with my father through to the match I will compete at this weekend, there has been no greater lesson when it comes to guns than this: Training is required. Training isn't just good, preferred, or beneficial as we've heard it described during proponent testimony. It's required. Required because guns are tools and not toys. And because they are tools with the capability to inflict great harm training is and should remain required before they are employed in the public sphere for the purpose of defense.

As a participant in gun culture from a young age I have seen movement toward a fetish-centered focus on the use and employment of firearms and less focus on responsibility. I think a lot of this stems from a change in how we, as Americans are introduced to guns. Traditionally, we learned through our family or the military. More recently, our community is learning about guns through movies and video games. A poor substitute.

In my time shooting at public and private ranges throughout the state I have seen gun owners fire from the hip, fire guns upside down, attempt to fire guns without sights, etc.. I have had to remove a handgun from one individual who was attempting to clear what he thought was a malfunction immediately behind another person with his finger on the trigger. Most recently, I observed two 18-year-old boys in Vance's walk in with what appeared at first glance to be a condition 1 AR-15, uncased, so they could use the range. As I offered them an ECI (Empty Chamber Indicator) I realized that their gun had no sights whatsoever and moreover, they didn't know they needed them to fire a gun safely. They were 18 and just wanted to shoot the gun they used in Call of Duty. If this law passes, when they reach the age of 21, they'll want to carry the gun they used in Call of Duty. And if this passes, we'll allow it.. with zero training.

Before a recruit in the Marines fires his first shot he spends a week, called grass week, becoming familiar with his firearm. He or she learns how to care for it, how it operates, how to safely use it, and what its capabilities are. The Marine Corps not only does this not only because it instills good order and discipline, but because they know what we know: That when it comes to guns,

training is required. The state would be well advised to continue to follow this example when considering this bill.

Mandating such training is in no way counter to the Second Amendment of the US Constitution or Article One, Section 4 of the Ohio Constitution. Both documents were specifically ordained to “promote the general welfare” (or “common welfare” in the case of the Ohio Constitution) and their mere existence self-evidently provides the case for governments to establish, oversee, and promote law and order through regulations.

I listened to all of proponent testimony on this bill and I’m still trying to determine what sort of injury to gun owners, such as myself, that this bill aims to alleviate. If we can reasonably assume that the passage of this bill could lead to an untrained person carrying a concealed weapon in public and the danger that might cause then shouldn’t there be some greater corresponding benefit to its passage? If so, what is that in this case?

If it’s the cost associated, then why not talk about a stipend. If it’s the availability of training then let’s talk about incentives for instructors. Let’s find some way forward that provides for the “common welfare.” Otherwise, the principled frustration on the part of a minority of Ohio gun owners will come at the cost of some Ohioans with zero knowledge carrying concealed handguns on public streets. It’s a bad idea and a worse bill.

I thank you for your time this morning.