

Testimony of Amy Whitson, MD
In Opposition to House Bill 178
Federalism Committee
05 June 2019

My name is Dr. Amy Whitson and I am a trauma surgeon in central Ohio. I teach Advanced Trauma Life Support and further serve our community by volunteering at the Columbus Department of Public Health seeing patients who would otherwise have no access to health care. I vehemently oppose HB 178 because I have seen and experienced the effects of gun violence since I began my medical career over 20 years ago.

I began my training in an urban community in South Texas where guns are readily accessible. When I dissected a bullet out of the jaw of my cadaver, I began to experience first-hand the depth and breadth of gun violence and terror that rips lives apart and destroys communities. A young woman was brought in one night after being shot close range with a shotgun, which missed her vital structures, and I spent the next 12 hours with surgical colleagues reconstructing the half of her face that was missing. HB 178 would permit more people to carry out violent acts such as this.

Part of our training as trauma surgeons focuses on firearms and the destruction they cause. Guns are a tool, and those tools have ONE PURPOSE. They are designed specifically to kill, maim, and create as much tissue destruction as possible. Their purpose is not to be used as defensive tools or for peacekeeping. Citizens who own cars must be trained and carry a license to operate these potentially dangerous vehicles; HB 178 suggests that civilians don't need a license to operate guns, arguably more lethal now than automobile trauma.

My first day on trauma call in Ohio, not quite a year ago, I pulled a bullet out of one side of a young woman's bleeding abdomen while my colleagues pulled out her suffering baby from the other side. There were two victims that day, and if she had been armed, as the authors and supporters of this bill would advocate, there would have been three if not more. We endure this burden of human suffering, pain, and cycle of violence daily, not just in the trauma bays and operating rooms, but for years beyond as victims depend on us to help them heal.

I am also a mother of two school-aged children, and the wife of a cardiothoracic transplant surgeon. Do you remember where you were the morning of the Sandy Hook school shooting? It is incomprehensible to me that conscientious, law abiding adults who took an oath to serve and protect their communities, just as law enforcement officers and physicians do, would create a bill that promotes and encourages this violence to continue. Our family lives with this violence on a daily basis as my husband receives offers daily to recover the heart and lungs from young victims of gunshot wounds to the head.

Please help us and our law enforcement neighbors keep our children, families, and communities safe and healthy without allowing more gun violence to threaten lives and futures of our patients. HB 178 is dangerous and places more citizens' lives at risk.