

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Opponent testimony

HB178 Permitless Concealed Carry

Chairman Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Minority Member Miller, and members of the House Federalism Committee:

Thank you for hearing my testimony today. I am a psychiatric crisis clinician, based at a facility here in Columbus. Last month, our facility was placed on lockdown for more than 12 hours after a client, who is known to have a concealed carry permit and a cache of guns at his disposal, threatened to “shoot up” his workplace and then come and do likewise to our facility. Since January, we have had multiple episodes of people coming onto our premises with guns concealed on their bodies. My colleagues tell me that these incidents have started to escalate in frequency. In one such incident, a couple came into our lobby, arguing and shoving each other. A gun fell out of one of their coats and they both dived for it, fighting each other for the gun on the ground. Meanwhile the nurses and social workers on the unit ducked for cover or ran out the back door, and clients on the unit panicked and ran to the back door too but couldn’t leave the unit. I was informed later that the individual carrying the gun also had a concealed carry permit.

Propaganda tells us that licensed permit holders are all average citizens, just looking to protect themselves and their communities, like heroes. I don’t doubt that for many, that is true, but it is naïve to imagine that every person who legally purchases a gun and takes it with them in public is a well-intentioned hero. If the man who held up our facility can get a concealed carry permit, and so can the couple who wrestled for control of a handgun in our lobby, then who is getting turned away? And when these permits are no longer required, just what kind of people will be walking around in our public spaces, with guns concealed?

Several years ago, one of our employees was shot and killed in one of our other facilities. It is incredibly disheartening to hear in every meeting or discussion about employee safety that it is only a matter of time before it happens again. That we must take steps to ensure our own safety, because our state legislature cannot be counted on to pass laws that will protect us. As psychiatric crisis workers, we already deal with intense stress and the knowledge that our jobs could become dangerous at any time, even without a weapon involved. The last thing we need, in a job where we are routinely threatened and assaulted, is the fear that the agitated person who just walked in the front door has a handgun tucked under their coat, and that the law emboldens them to do exactly that.

In the summer of 2005, I personally witnessed a man being shot and killed by a handgun, wielded by a person who had no business possessing that weapon. I have seen what a gun can do to a human body, and I never want to see

that happen to my colleagues, our clients, or myself. I urge you to reconsider this bill, which will do nothing for public safety, but will increase the paralyzing culture of fear that we are now living under. We are told more and more that this is just the price we must pay so that dangerous people can exercise their right to buy and wield deadly weapons. The citizens of Ohio should not have to live in fear. That fear will only increase if we cannot go to any public space that doesn't have a "no guns" sign up, without fear that a dangerous person could be concealing a gun, and with no law restricting them from doing so. Thank you for your consideration.

Jennifer Scholl, MSW, LSW

Board of Directors

Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence