

**Testimony on House Bill 178**  
**House Federalism Committee**  
**Representative John Becker, Chair**  
**Representative Reggie Stoltzfus, Vice Chair**  
**Representative Adam C. Miller, Ranking Member**  
**Submitted by**  
**Mary Ellen Steele-Pierce**

Representative Becker and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony in opposition to House Bill 178. My name is Mary Ellen Steele-Pierce and I'm a constituent of Ohio HD65, Mr. Becker's district. When I considered standing before you I thought, "I'm just an ordinary citizen. What do I bring to the table?" Then I realized that is exactly what I have in common with all of you. I'm a life-long Ohio resident and an attentive and passionate citizen.

I've read the entire language of House Bill 178 and its accompanying online documents – and I've read the proponent and opponent testimony from your first three hearings. I have 35 years experience as an Ohio teacher, school district administrator and researcher so I wanted a fuller understanding of this proposed law and its arguments.

Here is what I have learned from the testimonies given thus far. We widely share these opinions:

- We respect the US Constitution and its Bill of Rights.
- We have concealed carry legislation in Ohio that aligns with the constitutional right to carry and its incumbent responsibilities.
- We believe that training and safety are important components of owning and carrying a firearm.
- We recognize a shared need for law and order and hold a respect for and deference to law enforcement officials.
- We all want to feel safe.

What, then, is the purpose of this law? Whom does it protect? How does it promote the general welfare of all Ohioans?

Proponents say HB 178 will reduce "blood in the streets." If the intended outcome of this law is to reduce firearm violence, this is not supported by evidence. States with permitless carry laws see a substantial *increase* in firearm violence. Since 2003, the rate of aggravated assaults committed with a firearm in Alaska — the first state to enact permitless carry — increased by 82% by 2017.<sup>1,2</sup> Since Arizona's permitless carry legislation passed in 2010, aggravated firearms assaults increased by 39% by 2017.<sup>3,4</sup> And in Missouri where the permitless carry became law just two years ago, St. Louis saw a 25% increase in aggravated assaults with a gun in the first year.<sup>5,6</sup>

Gun violence remains a serious threat to Ohio residents. In an average year, over 1,400 Ohioans are shot and killed with guns.<sup>7</sup> Spencer Cormier, the only son of my friends Bruce and Patti, was one of those 2017 shooting fatalities. Ohioans continue to be less protected than more so.

Recent data, for instance, show there are *unintended* consequences of permitless carry. One is a dramatic increase in *stolen guns*. In St. Louis, Missouri, the number of stolen guns reported increased from 200 in 2009 to 597 in 2018. In Tennessee—also a permitless carry state—the number of guns reported stolen from vehicles doubled in one year: 2,203 in 2016 to 4,064 one year later. “It’s enough to shock you,” said a representative of the Nashville Metropolitan Police Department.<sup>8</sup>

Here is what I ask of this committee.

Please heed the evidence from permitless carry states.

Please defer to law enforcement experts: Toledo Patrolman’s Association, Buckeye State Sheriff’s Association, Van Wert County Sheriff’s Office, Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, Orange Village Police Department and the Fraternal Order of Police all testified here before you. All of them opposed this bill.<sup>9</sup>

Please remember what Justice Antonin Scalia wrote in his majority opinion of *District of Columbia v. Heller*, “There seems to us no doubt, on the basis of both text and history, that the Second Amendment conferred an individual right to keep and bear arms. Of course the right was not unlimited, just as the First Amendment’s right of free speech was not.”<sup>10</sup>

Finally, 90% of Ohio voters support requirements for concealed carry. Please listen to them.<sup>11</sup>

I ask for your No vote on House Bill 178.

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<sup>1</sup> Crime in Alaska 2003. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Public Safety Statewide Services. <https://bit.ly/2Hy475w>.

<sup>2</sup> Crime in Alaska 2017. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Public Safety Statewide Services. <https://bit.ly/2G0nq4R>.

<sup>3</sup> Crime in Arizona, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona: Arizona Department of Public Safety. <https://bit.ly/2Uffq3Q>.

<sup>4</sup> Crime in Arizona, 2017. Phoenix, Arizona: Arizona Department of Public Safety. <https://bit.ly/2Rds4hV>.

<sup>5</sup> Report: CRM0013-BY: Part 1 Crime Comparison Based on UCR Reporting Neighborhood Report. City of St. Louis, MO: Metropolitan Police Department. January 6, 2017. <https://bit.ly/1kzVFQP>.

<sup>6</sup> Report: CRM0013-BY: Part 1 Crime Comparison Based on UCR Reporting Neighborhood Report. City of St. Louis, MO: Metropolitan Police Department. January 8, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2HDE8tA>.

<sup>7</sup> Firearm Mortality by State. Center for Disease Control. National Center for Health Statistics. <http://bit.ly/2XIEmc7>. Everytown for Gun Safety analysis; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) Fatal Injury Reports. A yearly average was developed using five years of most recent available data: 2013 to 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Kaste, Martin. More Guns In Cars Mean More Guns Stolen From Cars. May 1, 2019. <https://n.pr/2KgH8eU>.

<sup>9</sup> Ohio House of Representatives, Federalism Committee testimony. <http://bit.ly/2QEjjPj>.

<sup>10</sup> *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570 [22] (2008).

<sup>11</sup> Survey USA Survey, March 2016.