

Testimony on House Bill 178
House Federalism Committee
Rep. John Becker, Chair
Rep. Reggie Stoltzfus, Vice Chair
Rep. Adam C. Miller, Ranking Member

Submitted by:
Patrick Costa

Dear Chair Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present and submit testimony regarding this bill. I am a soon-to-be-father and a gun-owner. I am opposed to this bill for the two reasons outlined below.

1. Violent Crime

You've heard claims from proponents that concealed carry does not increase crime. Implying that since concealed carry causes no increase in violent crime, permitless carry must also produce no increase in violent crime. In 2018 the Rand Corporation produced a meta analysis of studies published since 2003 looking for evidence that various gun policies work. They reviewed concealed carry, permitting & licensing, and permitless carry and found them all to be inconclusive, lacking rigor, or limited.¹ The truth is we do not know if permitless carry will or will not increase violent crime.

Maybe removing training and permitting will result in fewer violent crimes; maybe the exact opposite. But why experiment on the public by passing this bill and finding out?

2. State Has a Moral Obligation to Protect Public Safety and Liberty

You've heard from proponents that they think they have some kind of mandate for permitless carry. You've even heard from some of them that background checks are "unnecessary". Surveys show the exact opposite. Fewer than 1 in 3 adults support firearms in public² and between 80-90% of Americans support expanded background checks.³ This data has not varied much over the years and proponents of this bill do not have the public support they claim they have.

While free people have the right to defend themselves, that doesn't also mean you get to infringe upon my family's right to be safe and secure in public by putting guns in the hands of

¹ Morrall, Andrew. "The Science of Gun Policy". *Rand Health Q.* 2018 Aug; 8(1): 5.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6075800/>; "Effects of Concealed Carry on Violent Crime". *The Rand Corporation.* <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/concealed-carry/violent-crime.html>. Note, that the Rand studies did not get into detail the issues with categorizing violent crime which itself is another issue beyond the scope of this argument.

² Julia Wolfson et al. "US Public Opinion on Carrying Firearms in Public Places". *American Journal of Public Health.* June 2017.

³ Gallup Historical Polling data. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1645/guns.aspx>. Accessed May 27th 2019.

untrained fellow Ohioans. Indeed, requiring folks to get comprehensively trained in usage, handling, and storage reduces injuries, accidents, and firearm suicides.⁴ This makes sense as those who get exposed to the tenets of responsible firearm ownership begin to put it into practice and lessen the public risk. With suicides, the reduction comes from the process. Failure to complete the process, means no gun, hence no ability for gun suicide. Those states which have done away with training and permitting have seen an increase in both firearm injuries and suicides.⁵ Even the NRA and the Buckeye Firearms Association recognize this need and offer resources and training to fill the gap.⁶ Moreover, with concealed-carry laws there is some evidence that it causes an increase in injuries, undercutting the proponents claims that concealed-carry users are safe.⁷ Finally, even in the military you don't get to carry a weapon until you have passed a basic safety course. The military recognizes the danger that relaxed standards have on unit safety.⁸ Imagine what can only happen if we remove the training and permitting for civilians.

You've also heard the argument that there is no distinction between open carrying a gun and tossing a jacket over it, implying that we ought to "dumb down" concealed-carry laws. However, it ignores trust. If someone is open-carrying near my family, I have no idea who they are and whether or not they have permits and training. They could be an ex-Navy SEAL or an off duty police officer⁹ or it could be someone who has no idea what they are doing. While I have no way to establish trust, at least in this instance I know I can leave the area to protect my family. If this bill passes and the gun is concealed, I have no way of knowing at all and as a result puts my family's safety at an elevated and unnecessary risk.

It becomes all the more difficult to enjoy life and liberty in Ohio if my family now has to be increasingly concerned about getting shot in public as we attend a movie, a church, a concert, a college campus, a political rally, or engage in commerce at a mall. At least with the current law, imperfect as it is, I know if you conceal carry you have training and permitting and if you do not, you are the bad guy.

⁴ LS Miller and Lainhart R. "Prevention of Handgun Accidents Through Owner Training". *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*. Jan., 1989.; Shenassa ED, Rogers ML, Spalding KL, et al "Safer Storage of Firearms at Home and Risk of Suicide: A Study of Protective Factors in a Nationally Representative Sample". *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 2004;58; Cassandra K. Crifasi et al. "Effects of Changes in Permit-To-Purchase Handgun Laws in Connecticut and Missouri on Suicide Rates". *Preventive Medicine*. Oct., 2015;79:43-9. This study found a 15% reduction in suicide rates for having permits and training. There is also evidence that a "suicide substitution effect" where folks use a different method (like a knife) fails to occur, but such a discussion is beyond the scope of this argument.

⁵ Refer to Cassandra K. Crifasi et al, for the effects on Missouri. See also the research done by Everytown in regards to assaults and injuries related to firearms and the lack of permits in several states. <https://everytownresearch.org/permitless-carry/>. Accessed May 27th 2019.

⁶ See web resources: <https://www.buckeyefirearms.org/health-and-safety-gun-owners> & <https://firearmtraining.nra.org/> & <https://gunsafetyrules.nra.org/>. Accessed May 27th 2019.

⁷ "Effects of Concealed-Carry Laws on Unintentional Injuries and Deaths". *The Rand Corporation*. <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/concealed-carry/unintentional-injuries.html>. Accessed May 27th 2019.

⁸ Command Sgt. Maj. Leeford C. Cain. "Gun Safety is No Accident". https://www.army.mil/article/143772/gun_safety_is_no_accident; Lori Yerdon. "Back to Basics: Weapons Safety". https://www.army.mil/article/90238/back_to_basics_weapons_safety. Accessed May 27th 2019.

⁹ Of course that does not mean they bring no risk, only that there is a good chance the risk is lowered as presumably they have lots of firearm training.

Proponents like to pretend everyone is a good guy, but we do not live in their ideal world. The real world is large, complex, with humans not always acting trustful. Not everyone has been exposed to firearm training such as through the Boy Scouts, the Military, or through an NRA course¹⁰ or are responsible enough to do so on their own accord.¹¹ People will get exposed to guns one way or another and it is important they get the right message: *Safety and Responsibility*. One can envision the disastrous results of someone watching a Hollywood movie or playing a violent video game, deciding a gun is cool, buying it, and then walking around in public at your kids' soccer game.

As we do not live in an idealized world where everyone always trusts one another to do the right thing, the only solution is for the state to step in and compel fellow Ohioans to get the training and permitting for carrying firearms in public. Doing so neither infringes on said right nor is burdensome. It strikes the perfect balance between the right of self-defense and a family's right to be both safe in public and its ability to exercise liberties.

An analogy might help drive the point home further. Let's say a doctor prescribes you two pills: one pill is large and requires an extra step before using—like breaking it in half—but it is known to reduce your illness, whereas the other pill has no extra step and is highly likely to hurt you more than it will help. Which pill would you take a chance on? Which pill might you tell your child to take?

I urge the committee members to please vote no.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to present.

¹⁰ Kristof, Nicholas. "How to Reduce Shootings". *The New York Times*. Nov 6th, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/06/opinion/how-to-reduce-shootings.html>. Accessed May 27th 2019. Audits of NRA courses have found the emphasis to be less on gun safety and more on proselytizing gun-ownership. I suppose some exposure to training/information is better than none. Though, how *effective* the gun safety programs are is a different question altogether and is beyond the scope of this argument. As an Eagle Scout myself, I was exposed to several years of training and it was drilled into me: Safety and Responsibility.

¹¹ Rowhani-Rahbar A, Lyons VH, Simonetti JA, et al "Formal Firearm Training Among Adults in the USA: Results Of a National Survey" *Injury Prevention*. 2018;24:161-165. Approximately 40% of firearm owners get no safety training or exposure to said training.