

Rebecca S. Hall's Testimony

June 5, 2019

My testimony today concerns provisions of HB 178 regarding the carrying of concealed weapons in Ohio. This bill significantly increases the risk of bodily harm and death to all Ohioans, including police officers, students, teachers, and the general public. I have lived in Ohio for 47 of my 50 years. I am a public school teacher, and I have three children. My youngest child is a student at a public high school. My middle child is a college student in Ohio. My oldest child just graduated from college in Ohio, and he will soon become an Ohio teacher.

HB 178 removes the requirement of licensure for anyone legally carrying a concealed weapon. Rather than any training in handling these weapons, regardless of the cursory nature of the training, this bill allows anyone over the age of 21 to carry a concealed weapon. Anyone at all, even someone who knows nothing about handling a deadly firearm, would be permitted to have one on their person or in their vehicle almost anywhere in the state. In addition, this potentially completely untrained person would have no obligation to inform police officers that he or she had such a weapon with them.

Further, anyone currently charged with a felony or a violent misdemeanor may carry a concealed weapon, and so may anyone convicted of a misdemeanor assault of a police officer or any misdemeanor assault twice in the past five years. Violent criminals are permitted to carry concealed weapons without licensure under this bill, and they do not have to inform law enforcement officers that they are carrying. This is dangerous and ill-advised.

I fail to see how either the lack of licensure or the lack of responsibility to inform officers makes Ohioans safer in any way. In fact, these provisions make Ohioans significantly less safe at all times. Even at my own school and at my daughter's school, I feel unsafe with this bill. Just off school property, within the school safety zone, anyone could carry a concealed weapon with no obligation to inform law enforcement. As I supervise students outside at recess, my students and I could be shot. As my daughter walks between buildings of her school or out to the track for PE class, she could be shot. Anyone convicted of misdemeanor assault could carry a concealed weapon and have no obligation to reveal that to the school resource officer.

Further, anyone convicted of carrying without a license or of failing to inform police of such concealed carry can request expungements of these crimes. Law enforcement officers, judges, and the public would have no way of knowing of these crimes under HB 178. If an Ohioan requests a restraining order against someone previously convicted of concealed carry violations, that conviction will not appear on the convicted person's records. That places stalking victims and domestic violence victims at significant risk of injury or death.

HB 178 makes Ohio a more dangerous state. As elected officials of this state, I urge you to make our state a safe place to live and to visit. Represent all Ohioans and vote NO on HB 178.

Rebecca S. Hall