



TESTIMONY CONCERNING OHIO HB 178 BY THE REVEREND DR. JACK SULLIVAN, JR.

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One of the most enduring ties that binds humanity is that of fear. At the heart of our fears is that dreaded sense of vulnerability, the feeling that somehow the door to our sense of security and well-being has been left open for someone to exploit. Not many of us like feeling vulnerable, particularly during times of uncertainty or when we are in situations that are beyond our control.

I think it is this reason that many of our fellow citizens feel the need to keep in their possession weapons, particularly, handguns. Whether following the statutes of duty required to protect, defend, or serve, or simply adhering to a sense of personal freedom and comfort, many of our fellow citizens openly carry handguns; others choose to conceal the presence of a handgun on their person. The presence of guns give many of those who possess them a sense that they are managing the risk around themselves and therefore reducing their sense of vulnerability.

However, there are others within the human family who hide their possession of handguns not out of concern for their own vulnerability but to render those around them as vulnerable. People in this category are not seeking to protect, defend, and serve humanity but instead, assault it and make others feel vulnerable and at risk.

As I give thought to HB 178, I feel quite concerned that if enacted, this bill will give people the right to not disclose their possession of a concealed, loaded gun, even when stopped by members of law enforcement. This chilling reality means that officers who willingly protect us will be at risk for violent actions of people with concealed guns who are not required to disclose their possession of them. I do not understand how we can value law enforcement officers while simultaneously placing them at risk with HB 178.

What is also chilling about HB 178 is its allowance for persons to carry concealed, loaded guns without a license, background check, or training, even if they have been charged with pending felonies and violence-related crimes, including misdemeanor assault on a police officer. We demand more from people to drive a car, go fishing, or to get married than this bill requires for people to carry hidden from view, weapons of deadly force.

As one who serves and works alongside people of faith and trust who value human dignity, honor, freedom, and justice, I feel quite alarmed that a bill like HB 178 would ever be given serious consideration. This bill is not an antidote to fear but an accelerant. It neither protects the common good nor promotes it. Instead, it unnecessarily places police officers and all of us at risk. HB 178 is a clear and present danger to the well-being of us all. I urge you to vote against this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr.
Executive Director
Ohio Council of Churches