

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, good morning and thank you for the taking the time to listen to me today. My name is Alex Heckman and I am a Member of the Westerville City Council, which recently passed a resolution opposing HB 178. However, I am speaking today ONLY for myself. I voted in opposition to HB 178, because I believe it is unnecessary and that it irresponsibly endangers the lives of our police officers and citizens. I also believe it is critically important to protect the 2nd Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens AND for all Ohioans to be safe in their communities.

First, I want to address the concern that citizens may be charged with violating the conceal carry law for making innocent mistakes, such as by not informing all the police officers on a scene that they are carrying a concealed weapon. The facts do not support this concern. [According to the Ohio Legislative Service Commission](#), between 2012 and 2017, 175 people were incarcerated for violating the conceal carry law. This is fewer than 30 people per year, on average.

A select review of these cases found that people were only being charged with violating the Conceal Carry Law in conjunction with the commission of another serious crime. This evidence matches my experience with the fine officers of the Westerville Police Department. In Westerville, our brave police officers are looking to protect our residents from criminals and dangerous individuals, not to inconvenience or harass citizens for making innocent mistakes while exercising their 2nd Amendment rights.

Both sides on this issue agree that law-abiding Ohioans should be able to own and use firearms in a responsible manner. The current law facilitates this goal, while HB 178 looks to remove common-sense safety requirements that are based upon the notion of personal responsibility, which is the common-sense principle that citizens must exercise their rights in a manner that does NOT infringe upon the rights of others. Under the guise of free speech, you may not yell fire in a crowded movie theater. In exercising your freedom of religion, you may not cover your face when getting an Ohio Driver's license photo taken. These are actual examples of limitations on individual rights based on the

principle that your rights end when they infringe upon the rights and safety of others.

The current law strikes a better balance between the competing rights of Ohioans. [According to the Columbus Dispatch](#), in 2018, 1,436 requests for concealed-carry licenses were denied. In total, 5,053 people had their conceal carry licenses denied, suspended, or revoked because they were NOT law-abiding citizens, but were instead criminals and violent individuals who should not be permitted to own guns nor to conceal carry.

The facts I have presented so far are evidence that the current law works to protect the rights and safety of all Ohioans by:

- 1) Educating Ohioans about who is and is not eligible to conceal carry
- 2) Helping prevent ineligible people from obtaining a permit to conceal carry

3) Incorporating penalties that can serve to deter individuals from carrying illegally

4) Providing for appropriate punishment for those who do violate the conceal carry law

Most importantly, the current law helps protect Ohioans because it incorporates the principle of personal responsibility by requiring eight hours of training on relevant Ohio laws, gun safety, and proper shooting techniques. These training requirements are critical for ensuring that citizens who choose to conceal carry in public act in a legal and responsible manner. If an individual is going to shoot a gun in a public space, they have an OBLIGATION to know the law AND to act responsibly to avoid seriously injuring or killing innocent people.

The scientific research is very clear on what happens when an individual shoots a gun in a high stress situation – they miss their target much more often than they hit it. Research shows that while under stress even highly trained individuals, such as police officers and military personnel, hit their intended target

with any given shot less than 20 percent of the time. You heard that right trained professionals miss their target more than 80 percent of the time. Even with multiple shots, they hit their target less than 50 percent of the time.¹

HB 178 eliminates all training requirements for individuals to conceal carry, which eviscerates the principle of personal responsibility from the law thereby endangering the lives of Ohioans. While I wish we lived in the world of Hollywood where a good guy pulls out a gun in public and cleanly shoots the bad guy with no harm to anyone else. Ohio isn't Hollywood. Ohio is the real world. And in the real world, even highly trained people miss their target most of the time when they are under stress. And when a good guy misses, innocent people are likely to be injured or killed.

The fact is that people need training to act in a legal and safe manner when they are going to be shooting in public spaces

¹ For example, see Gregory B. Morrison, Bryan J. Vila, (1998) "Police handgun qualification: practical measure or aimless activity?", *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, Vol. 21 Issue: 3, pp. 510-533, <https://doi.org/10.1108/13639519810228804> and Arne Nieuwenhuys, Raoul R. D. Oudjans, (2010) "Effects of anxiety on handgun shooting behavior of police officers: a pilot study", *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, Vol. 23, Issue 2, pp. 225-233.

with innocent people nearby. While the current training requirements are woefully inadequate for preparing people to act effectively under stress, removing them is irresponsible.

In summary, the current Conceal Carry law is functioning exactly as it should. The vast majority of citizens follow the law because it is the law. As a result, those people are learning how to exercise their right in a legal and responsible manner. Further, the current law includes penalties that deter some people from carrying a gun illegally. And individuals that choose to violate the law face harsher penalties.

The current law is working. Please do not pass HB 178.

Thank you for your time.