

Dear honorable members of the House Federalism Committee,

I am writing in favor of HB 178 (Constitutional Carry), making it legal in Ohio for law-abiding individuals over 21 years of age to carry a concealed handgun without a permit.

I support HB 178 in large part because I understand the ability to carry a firearm in our state as a “right” and not a “privilege.” This right is protected in our Constitution and it is one that has been supported in previous legal challenges, including decisions by the Supreme Court. Contrary to popular belief, the right to carry also corresponds with less crime, not more. Statistics indicate that violence has been decreasing dramatically in the United States over the past 20 years, despite perceptions otherwise. At the same time, an increasing number of states have adopted Constitutional Carry. I understand that a correlation is not causation, but it is clear that the doom predicted with the movement toward Constitutional Carry has not materialized. In fact, quite the opposite has happened, with the Crime Prevention Research Center and others reporting that murder rates have dropped despite the expansion of the numbers of residents in the U.S. carrying firearms. For example, the state of Vermont, a Constitutional Carry state since the beginning of our republic, is frequently cited as one of the safest states in the country. Similarly, West Virginia, Arizona and Alaska all enacted Constitutional Carry, with no corresponding increase in violent crime. Arizona and Alaska, even experienced a *decrease* in murder rates over the first 5 years following passage. That is the data. That is the evidence. Additional examples from other states who have passed Constitutional Carry are also available, including neighboring states.

We speak of the importance of evidence-based decision-making in policy and in key fields where lives are at stake, such as medicine. In making this decision, I implore the Committee to acknowledge the evidence and move forward to pass Constitutional Carry in Ohio. I had hoped to be able to attend the hearing personally to deliver this message, but scheduled commitments do not allow this possibility. Please except this brief personal testimony in support of HB 178. This is more than common sense, this is data based.

Sincerely,
/s/

Jonathan B. VanGeest
Aurora, OH