

**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: Keri Butler

Chair Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony against House Bill 178. My name is Keri Butler and I am speaking to you today as a concerned private citizen, a gun incident survivor, a proud Ohioan and American who believes we all could do better to protect our children and communities. The liberal provisions in HB 178 regarding concealed carry would increase my fear and uncertainty—and those of my friends and family, and all Ohioans—over who may be carrying a concealed weapon and when we might be at greater risk of gun violence.

Forty years ago my family survived a gun incident. That singular event forever changed my life, as well as my sisters', mother's and the rest of our family.

Over the past four decades since, I have sought to understand what shapes people's views and our laws regarding firearms.

What I am trying to understand is how weakening our current concealed carry legislation will make Ohio a safer place. In order to continue supporting my elected officials, I need someone to explain why any legislator informed about the statistics on the connection between the lack of training and knowledge of guns and increased gun incidents and violence—as you have heard repeatedly in opponent testimony—would vote for legislation that allows virtually anyone to conceal carry in a public place without training and a permit.

Initially after my family's gun violence experience, I asked law enforcement officials how people obtained guns, permits, licenses and training. I used to work out with a police captain. We would discuss what he believed put officers and citizens at danger. He felt strongly that everyone initially needed training, and once a permit was obtained, everyone would benefit from frequent, regular refresher training, especially anyone who didn't regularly visit a shooting range. In a discussion with my nephew, who is an NRA member, we talked about his thoughts on who should have permits and training.

My most comprehensive and ongoing discussions have been with my cousin Scott. He grew up living and hunting on a farm with his father. He served in the US Army and retired from the Michigan State Police. He explained the training he received first as a hunter, later in the military, and then as law enforcement. He believes in common sense gun regulations, including training and permits. He has a number of concerns with the increasingly liberal and weakening approach to gun permitting.

For me, I believe that understanding all sides of a topic is the only and best way to make an informed decision. I vote for lawmakers who are educated and informed on the topics that create a safer community and state. I do not want to live in fear, nor do I make decisions based on fear.

Keeping the concealed carry permit legislation in place, creates an environment where I and my fellow citizens can feel safe knowing that training and permitting are required and that there is a mechanism in place supporting and protecting our law enforcement. Just because we can't stop every criminal act doesn't mean there shouldn't be laws. The current legislation strikes the right balance because it doesn't take away the right to conceal carry, it just makes sure the carriers are permitted and the public will be safer.