

Testimony of Gregory Lam, MD  
In Opposition to House Bill 178  
Federalism Committee  
June 2019

My name is Dr. Gregory Lam and I am a physician who practices in rural Southern Ohio. As physicians, we are dedicated to protecting the lives of our patients and improving the health of our communities. We are trained to make decisions through an impartial lens, guided by objective data and free of ideology or bias.

And the data is clear that gun violence is a public health crisis. In 2018 firearm deaths in the United States reached a staggering high of approximately 40,000. In Ohio our firearm mortality continually increases each year and now surpasses the national averages. According to the Centers for Disease Control, Ohio's total firearm mortality rate is 13.7% whereas the national average is 12%; Ohio's firearm homicide rate is 7.5% whereas the national average is only 6.2%. There is no doubt that gun violence is a growing threat to Ohioans.

The proponents of HB 178 argue that arming citizens will protect them from gun-related harm. Let me be clear: There is no conclusive data that arming citizens in public spaces protects them from violence or creates a significant deterrent to potential wrong doers. This premise is based on a gut feeling but is not substantiated by facts.

There is, however, considerable data that loosening restrictions of conceal carry laws leads to more homicides. In the most comprehensive systematic review of firearm laws in the United States to date, Lee and colleagues (JAMA Internal Med, 2017; 177(1):106-119) reviewed all 8 scientific studies regarding conceal carry laws. They found that lessening conceal carry restrictions led to increased firearm homicides on city and state levels.

Another case study in southern Arizona demonstrated that the frequency of firearm homicides increased after the repeal of a conceal weapons law that allowed people to concealed carry a firearm without a permit (Journal Trauma Acute Care Surg, 2014; 76 (3) 569-574).

In a previous hearing Rep. Hood specifically questioned suicide rates. While suicides are a significant issue, these studies specifically looked at homicides rates; suicides were not included in these analyses. The scientific evidence is indisputable: repeal of conceal-carry laws increased homicides.

As a physician, I oppose HB 178 because it jeopardizes the health and safety of my patients. There is no objective data that this proposal will make our communities safer. Quite the contrary, the overwhelming data suggests that this bill will endanger innocent citizens and law-enforcement officers.

Legislators– like physicians – are entrusted to protect our citizens. I urge you to impartially consider this bill free of ideology or passion and based on the merits of scientific evidence. Passage of this bill will undermine the public’s trust in its elected leaders to keep them safe.

I urge you to oppose House Bill 178.