

## House Bill 178 Testimony

**Submitted By: Mitchell Pinsky, Founder and President of Students Demand Action at The Ohio State University**

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### Opening Statement

Chair Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for taking the time to read my testimony in opposition to House Bill 178. I regrettably could not attend any of the hearings in person, as I am currently home in South Florida for the summer, or else I would be here today giving this testimony in person. My name is Mitchell Pinsky and I am currently a sophomore at The Ohio State University and the founder and president of Students Demand Action at The Ohio State University. As a student in Ohio, I am greatly concerned about the negative consequences HB 178. I'm also concerned because I have already experienced firsthand how gun violence can shatter a community. My home is located 10 miles away from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. I have childhood friends there, saw the uncensored videos in real-time of frightened students screaming in their classrooms as bullets ricocheted in their halls and of students escaping their classrooms, only to see and step over the dead bodies of their peers.

In states where permitless carry legislation has been passed, there has been an increase in gun violence. For example, in Alaska since the passage of permitless carry legislation in 2003, the rate of aggravated assaults committed with a firearm in the state increased by 82 percent by 2017, and in Arizona since the passage of permitless carry legislation in 2010, the rate of aggravated assaults committed with a firearm in the state increased by 39 percent by 2017 ("Permitless Carry: Concealed," 2019). These precedents are extremely concerning given the current situation of gun violence in Ohio -- a situation I researched and wrote a report on in one of my classes this past semester. As you read the next section of this testimony, I urge you to put party politics aside and consider one question: If passed, how would HB 178 help combat the pervasive issue of gun violence that affects *all* Ohioans, especially given that it, according to the LSC's analysis of the bill, would allow for people who have committed violent crimes, drug crimes, hurt peace officers, and falsified a concealed weapons license?

### The Current State of Gun Violence in Ohio

In 2017, gun violence resulted in the deaths of 39,773 Americans— the highest number in almost 50 years ("13 Statistics That," 2018). The issue of gun violence — which manifests itself in forms that include homicides, suicides, mass shootings, and domestic violence — in the U.S. has become a part of daily life. According to *Gun Violence in America* (2019), the gun homicide rate in the U.S. is 25 times higher than that of other high-income countries, and 100 Americans die from gun violence everyday. Although gun violence is a national issue, it's extremely prevalent in Ohio. The Center for American Progress (2013) found that during the time period of

2001-2010, 3,766 Ohioans were murdered with guns. Shockingly, during this same time period, 3,480 Americans were killed in combat during the Iraq war, thus meaning less people were killed in Iraq during a *war* than at *home* in Ohio (Center for American Progress, 2013). The occurrence of gun violence in Ohio is becoming an even more urgent problem, as it continues to negatively affect numerous citizens.

In recent years, the scope of the gun violence issue in Ohio has increased. As Ludlow (2018) outlines, according to state-by-state data that started being compiled in 1999, 1,589 gun deaths occurred in Ohio in 2017. This number is much higher than the 253 people killed in 2000, Ohio's lowest year of gun violence. Additionally in just one year, the homicide gun rate of deaths per year increased to 5.3 deaths per 100,000 residents in 2017 from 4.8 deaths per 100,000 residents in 2016, both of which eclipsed the national rate of 4.5 deaths per 100,000 residents (Ludlow, 2018). With such a large scope, different areas of gun violence directly impact different groups of people. Regarding suicides, the more rural Appalachian counties and Caucasians were most affected, with the rate per 100,000 suicides using firearms being 9.0, which is the highest rate in Ohio (Shoaf, n.d.). Additionally, metropolitan counties and African-Americans are the populations most affected by homicides and gun violence in general. Of the 14,452 victims of firearm-related crimes in 2016, 5,034 were African-American males, 3,456 were Caucasian males 3,176 were African-American females, and 2,129 were Caucasian females (Shoaf, n.d.). Also, metropolitan counties had the highest rate per 100,000 of homicides involving firearms at 5.8 (Shoaf, n.d.). In Ohio, generally African-American populations are higher in urban areas than rural areas ("Ohio African-Americans," n.d.). Subsequently, this means African-Americans in metropolitan areas are most likely to be impacted by gun violence, as is the case in Cleveland. According to Harris-Taylor (2018), of the 64 homicides reported by Cleveland Police at the time her article was published, the majority of them had taken place in the largely African-American populated neighborhoods in Cleveland's east side. Given the fact that urban communities with large populations of African-American are generally poorer due to phenomenon such as redlining and gentrification, African-American urban communities are generally worse off when handling gun violence. As a result, they may not have the same resources available to combat gun violence in their communities. In addition, two major gun violence issues happen in Ohio: domestic violence and mass shootings — shootings in which 4 or more people are either killed or injured. According to the Center for American Progress (2014), "there were 383 domestic violence homicides in Ohio from 2003 to 2012." On top of this, as of June 17, 2019, 172 mass shootings have occurred so far this year ("Gun Violence Archive," 2019). Overall, with the large pervasiveness of gun violence in Ohio and its widespread effects, gun violence is a prominent and urgent issue in the Ohio community.

### Concluding Statement

One of the main arguments of proponents of HB 178 and other pro-firearms legislation is that restrictions on firearms infringe on the rights of law-abiding citizens. While I do respect and

understand the right to self-defense granted by the 2nd Amendment, I worry that HB 178 *hurts* law-abiding citizens rather than helping them. By giving criminals the opportunity to carry a concealed *deadly* weapon, the Ohio General Assembly would be sending a message that it is ok for criminals to carry concealed deadly weapons. If that were the case, then criminals would have the same concealed carry rights as law-abiding citizens do. I urge each of the representatives to contemplate the message of criminals being equal to law-abiding citizens that passing HB 178 would send and the current state of gun violence in Ohio when you vote on HB 178 -- a vote that should be a resounding "no."

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