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RE: Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 221

Good afternoon, Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee. My name is Christina Muryn and I am the Mayor of the City of Findlay, Ohio. I am here today in support of Senate Bill 221.

I believe the committee also received a letter of support from the executive board of the Ohio Mayors Alliance, which is a bipartisan coalition of mayors from Ohio's largest cities. I am a member of the Alliance and I'm proud to stand with my fellow mayors in support of these commonsense reforms.

Senate Bill 221, known as Strong Ohio, will make Ohio safer. It does so by giving our law enforcement agencies an important tool to help separate a potentially dangerous person from his or her weapons, while still preserving their vital constitutional right to due process. This legislation would enhance our current background check system by eliminating gaps in critical data. Additionally, the legislation creates greater accountability for illegal gun use and possession.

This year, through the budget and individual pieces of legislation, this legislature has invested significant dollars in access to mental health services, enhancing safety in our schools, and overall community safety. While I, along with my colleagues from across the state very much appreciate these steps, we believe this bill is the vital next step the state needs to take to protect our residents. This bill will accomplish this while preserving the rights set forth by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Ohio.

This proposal reinforces current measures while also creating new tools for our law enforcement to temporarily separate a dangerous person from the weapons they possess in situations where an immediate threat has been identified. It does so by using a combination of Ohio's current involuntary commitment process, or pink-slipping, with a newly created process for weapons seizure called Safety Protection Orders. This new system would get this person the treatment they need and separate them from their weapons, helping to keep them and those around them safe.

The bill would also make improvements to the current background check system by mandating that law enforcement agencies and courts submit disqualifying offenses into state and federal background check databases to ensure more accurate results. Ensuring that law enforcement agencies have the critical information they need to be able to execute their jobs in a timely and accurate manner. The Strong Ohio bill would also enhance penalties for those who sell a firearm to someone prohibited by law from purchasing a gun.

This last provision is particularly important. Non-licensed gun dealers must know that Ohio is serious about keeping guns out of the hands of criminals. If we are opting for a voluntary background check, the law must have the strength to prosecute and punish non-licensed gun dealers who sell firearms to those who would otherwise be prohibited by law from owning them. If we are not going to require background checks for non-licensed dealers, we must do all we can to ensure that those private sellers do not sell guns to an individual who is legally prohibited from owning one.

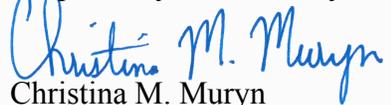
These main pillars of the Strong Ohio proposal are important steps in addressing the concerns the residents of Ohio have with gun violence in their state and country while balancing those with the constitutional rights we all have.

As leaders in our state, we have an opportunity before us to create legislation that addresses some of the critical gaps in our system while ensuring that the vital rights that make our country special are preserved. It will not be easy but I believe that by working together we can address a critical issue facing our communities and set an example for states across our great country.

I commend the work Governor DeWine and Senator Dolan have done to strike this balance and look forward to continued conversation with the legislature about the bill.

As a mayor and as a constituent, I strongly urge your favorable passage of the bill. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted by.



Christina M. Muryn

Mayor