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Committees:
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Education
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Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education

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State Senator
9th District

SPONSOR TESTIMONY SENATE BILL 219

Thank you Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni, and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee.

I stand here representing 66% of Americans (Feb. 20 Quinnipiac poll) who are no longer asking but demanding that we, as their elected representatives, enact reasonable gun control measures.

Once passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by Gov. Kasich, SB 219 will prohibit the sale and possession of bump-fire stocks and other gun modifiers in Ohio, and it will make the sale or possession of such devices for personal use a fourth-degree felony.

Bump stocks are devices that can be attached to semi-automatic rifles to enable them to fire in rapid succession. These devices essentially enable semi-automatics to mimic the continuous fire of fully automatic rifles—which were banned in 1986 under the National Firearms Act. The difference between a semi-automatic and an automatic weapon is that fully automatic weapons can fire multiple rounds with just one pull of the trigger, whereas semi-automatics only fire one round per one trigger pull. Adding a bump stock to a semi-automatic weapon allows the shooter to keep their finger still while the stock of the barrel bumps back and forth against their trigger finger, causing rapid, repeated fire at nearly the same rate as a fully automatic weapon.

In October, 2017, the Las Vegas shooter fired 1,100 rounds within 10 minutes, killing 58 people and injuring 422. A total of 851 were injured because of the panic that ensued. This device—which costs as little as \$50— took what would have been a tragedy and turned it into a massacre. People cannot survive such an attack without death or injury.

There is no conceivable reason why an individual needs to use a bump stock. It is not necessary for the defense of one's home or for the purpose of hunting or target practice. It is an extremely lethal device and serves no practical, valuable purpose.

Voters agree that bump-stocks are of no use to well-intentioned people. In 2017, nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of gun owners support a ban on bump stocks, which is only slightly less than 79% of registered voters who also support a ban. More than half of Republicans and Democrats alike support the measure (Politico/Morning Consult poll). Even Gov. Kasich said that he would absolutely support a bump-stock ban.

But, despite the fact that an overwhelming majority of our constituents want gun control measures in their state, I am well aware that any legislation seeking the slightest amount of firearm regulation is highly controversial in this legislature. So let me take a moment to address the common arguments I expect will be made to stop this bill from passing:

1. "This is a slippery slope: today, they will take our bump stocks; tomorrow, all guns!" This argument that any gun control measure is a masked attempt by the government to disarm the American people is an absurd fallacy upheld by conditional factors that are improbable beyond question. We banned machine guns in the 80s and citizens still have their firearms today. We banned guns on airplanes and citizens still have their firearms today. In the cities and states that have banned bump stocks, citizens still have their firearms today, and when we pass gun control measures in OH, citizens will still have their firearms, should they wish to own them.
2. "Bump-stock legislation is a "knee-jerk" reaction to the Las Vegas tragedy." There is a difference between legislation that is immediately *introduced* in response to a newly realized problem and legislation that is immediately *passed* because of such a problem. Our purpose as legislators is to address problems as they arise. So, it would be unfair and inaccurate to consider this bill impulsive simply because it is a response to the Las Vegas shooting. And while it *was* introduced right after the shooting, it is still timely now, 7 months after the tragedy. In fact, President Trump just last month voiced his approval for a bump stock ban. This legislature is no stranger to rushing the legislative process and passing bills through the assembly with little bipartisan discussion. But it has been months since this legislation was introduced and the public still believes it is necessary. This is why I ask that we continue discussing the bill in future hearings in order to make ensure it is as well-thought out as possible.

3. "Bump-stocks cause relatively few deaths, so a ban will not impact the frequency or deadliness of mass shootings." The first part of this argument is factually correct: this legislation is not the single best way to stop mass shootings or decrease their deadliness. But it is one way to prevent another Las Vegas from happening. A Michigan State University Professor at the School of Criminal Justice confirms that, "Until [the Vegas shooting], bump stocks have been a non-issue in firearm homicide (mass or not)," However, she points out that "... now that the door has been opened for their use, I suspect that future mass shooters may use them." She is referring to what experts call the "copycat" or "contagion" phenomenon, where acts of mass murder are normalized through media and inspire very similar acts of future violence. For example, we know that the Columbine shooter inspired Adam Lanza to carry out his attack at Sandy Hook. Then in 2016, Ethan Osborne planned, and I quote, to "beat Lanza [and take] at least 40 [lives]." Thankfully, he was unsuccessful and only 2 lives were lost in his attack at Townville Elementary School. Researchers are beginning to understand that gun rampages are socially contagious and have the power to incite similar tragic events in the future. We cannot ignore the potential for a Las Vegas copycat that would result in mass murder. If you ask yourself "why ban bump stocks," I would counter, "Why would we *not* ban bump stocks when the only thing this bill will do is prevent future tragedies?"

I can assure you that SB 219 does not infringe on 2nd amendment rights. It just means you can't convert a weapon into something it's not meant to be. Like most Constitutional rights, the Second Amendment right is not unlimited. The government can enact laws for the protection of its citizens if there is a compelling government interest, the law is narrowly tailored, and it is the least intrusive method of meeting the government's interest.

A bump stock ban would be an attempt to provide protection for our citizens, outlawing a device that modifies a gun into an unreasonably dangerous instrument. It's the same legal concept that was the basis for banning machine guns and outlawing bombs in the past.

Finally, I stand before you not only as a fellow senator, but also as a former police officer. I know each of you has great respect for law enforcement. This body has passed numerous bills to honor and protect law enforcement, and yet it isn't hearing their pleas to enact legislation that will make their lives safer.

We must face the reality that weapon use is not just limited to encounters between the police and the bad guys. A gun modified with a bump stock could be used in a shooting in another school, church, place of employment, or day care. This bill, along with others that

have recently been introduced, will substantively show police officers that they are valued and that measures are being taken to protect them in every way possible.

As legislators, it is our duty to make laws. That is our primary job. If it is true that legislation regulating guns is useless because, "criminals don't care about the law and will break it anyway," why do we make any laws at all? Certainly, we cannot refuse to create laws because we are afraid they won't work. This is the responsibility we are entrusted with: to make laws that guarantee people, first and foremost, the right to live. And if these finely-crafted, well-intentioned laws don't work, we try again and again until we find a solution that does.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you. On behalf of all the people here in this room today, I am asking that this important bill receive additional hearings in committee.