

Testimony on House Bill 228
Senate Government Oversight Committee
Rep. William P. Coley, II, Chair
Rep. Joe Uecker, Vice Chair

Submitted by:
Lyndsey Dudley

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on House Bill 228. My name is Lyndsey Dudley, and I am speaking to you today as a mother and as a concerned citizen who worries my state is going in the wrong direction when it comes to legislation intended to keep us safer. I am also submitting this testimony on behalf of 25 friends and neighbors from across Ohio, who learned I was going to meet with my Senator, Stephanie Kunze, about HB 228, and sent me letters of opposition for me to share with her. I was moved by their letters to write this testimony to share with your committee, and what follows reflects some of what they said in their letters. These constituents are Moms and Dads, Democrats and Republicans, gun owners and non-owners, active voices and more quiet observers who were horrified to hear what you are considering. They come from Columbus, Worthington, Wapokoneta, Lewis Center, Galena and Powell.

I know that many more of my fellow Ohioans would have liked to testify but this last minute schedule makes that extremely difficult. The attempt to push such concerning legislation through during the holiday season is questionable at best. Please trust us when we say we will certainly remember next election what you have tried to do here. The Ohio public is fed up. OUR testimony is the majority.

I believe many provisions in HB 228 would put my family, my neighbors, and all of Ohio at a greater risk of gun violence. As a mother of a 7 year old son and a 5 year old daughter, I worry about gun violence every day. Every. Single. Day. When I drop my son off at Elementary School, I say a prayer for his safety. When I drop my daughter off at preschool (Preschool!!!!!!) I look around the parking lot and make sure I don't see anyone suspicious. We do not need laws like HB228 that would downgrade the punishment if someone without a permit would carry a gun into one of their schools. A fine? Really? My kids are worth more than a fine. And so are yours.

What we need right now are stronger gun laws, not laws that weaken the penalty for carrying a gun illegally, or encourage people to shoot first, ask questions later.

There are 2 provisions in the bill that concern me the most:

1. The reduction of penalties on concealed carry without a permit
2. The removal of the "duty to retreat" when a safe exit is available

To address #1: Ohioans overwhelmingly support requiring a permit to carry a concealed weapon—as many as 90% of Ohio voters, according to a March 2016 survey by Survey USA.

HB 228 would remove the threat of serious punishment and encourage those with no firearms safety training, violent criminals and even drug offenders to carry concealed handguns in public. It would take the penalty from a first-degree misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail to a mere fine of up to \$150. Removing the possibility of jail time for unlawfully carrying a hidden, loaded handgun in public would encourage people to flout the law and carry without a permit. More guns do not make us safer. Because of a litany of challenges citizens face including

mental health issues, crises at home or perceived threats, what if these folks carrying their guns, with little to no thought to the consequence of their actions (because really, how bad is a fine?), use them to kill?? HOW DOES THIS MAKE OHIOANS SAFER?

Now to address concern #2: The removal of the “duty to retreat” when a safe exit is available.

Because many states have passed Stand Your Ground laws over a relatively short period of time, their impact has been studied and it would be irresponsible not to learn from this research. A quick Google search found a 2012 study that showed that in the 21 states that passed Stand Your Ground laws between 2000 and 2010, there was no evidence that crime was deterred, and homicides increased by 8% (<http://www.nber.org/papers/w18134.pdf>).

We should also trust the perspective of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, who testified that Stand Your Ground “allows the killing of an individual in certain situations where the death could have been avoided [...]. Remove the duty to retreat, and you remove a legal constraint that will allow pride, passion, and ego to prevail over common sense.” Shouldn’t we be taking the advice of the men and women who put their lives on the line for us each and every day, and who see the devastation of gun violence first hand?

Nothing about this law makes me feel safer. Nothing in this law leads me to believe that gun violence and gun deaths will decrease across our state. Can we agree that this should be a goal of this governing body?

Conversely, the evidence (some of which I have cited here, which I hope you will review yourselves before voting) shows clearly that some of these measures would increase gun violence.

I expect our legislators to find solutions to the multiple forms of gun violence—from suicides to mass shootings, domestic abuse killings, and other forms of homicide—that are on the rise in Ohio, as elsewhere in the US. Gun violence is an epidemic in America. Please show up for Ohioans and vote NO on HB228. Please show up for your constituents. Please show up so that generations to come don’t have to live in a world where Active Shooter drills are normal. They are not. None of this is. Please oppose this law, for the safety of your constituents.

Respectfully,

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