

Testimony against HB 796  
House Civil Justice Committee  
December 7, 2020

Submitted by Jennifer Weinbrecht

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patten, Ranking Member Brown and other members of the House Civil Justice Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to provide my testimony in opposition to House Bill 796. My name is Jennifer Weinbrecht. I grew up in south central Ohio (Springfield-Dayton region) and moved to Northeast Ohio in 1974 for college, and stayed here. I live in a rural county. With few exceptions, I have voted in every election in my adult life.

When I was growing up, I never thought I'd know people affected by the kinds of shootings that are far too common today. My parents discussed war and politics with us but would not allow us to have the news on during dinner because the Vietnam War was brought into our homes every evening in vivid detail. If you were alive then, you know there was no escaping the images of death that came to us from the war. I never imagined that someday my grandchildren would fear that same kind of violence in their own school. How did we get to a place where this kind of violence is commonplace in our schools and in our daily lives?

You recall the Chardon school shooting in 2012. My friend and co-worker's son typically sat at the table where the shooter aimed most of his bullets, but was kept home sick that day by his mom, which likely saved his life. The boys who died were friends of his son, well known to his family. The daughter of another co-worker was shot in the shoulder. These families were traumatized by this event, as was the entire school population and the town.

In 1994, three people my husband knew through playing in bands in the area were shot, and two were killed by a lone gunman, at a location in Wickliffe called the Rokspot, where bands rented rooms and held band practice. My husband had practiced with a band there himself and knew the shooter as well as the victims, but thankfully was not there that night.

**The element of surprise in these two tragedies was such that a "good person with a gun" would not have saved the lives of Daniel Parmertor, Russell King Jr., Demetrius Hewlin, James Sawicki, and Sharon Gilbride, nor prevented the lifelong crippling damage to Bob Schwartz and Nick Walczak that resulted from their wounds.**

**If a bystander with a gun had been able to intervene with either of these killers, our existing laws would have protected them for their actions in that moment. There is no need to add more protections. The emphasis on arming as many people as possible to prevent crime is not constructive, and is not working to lower crime or to lower gun deaths. Rather than emphasize and encourage citizens to engage in gun battles, why are we not putting our legislative efforts into preventing guns getting into the wrong hands with improved background checks and red-flag laws?**

My friends who live in other countries are not living in this kind of environment that emphasizes death over life, and escalation of violence through government policies. There are plenty of examples in our country and in others around the world where sensible gun laws make a difference.

Expanding “stand your ground” encourages more people to own guns and use them. The defense that a person feels threatened is vague and has already been used in other states to defend senseless killings.

Although my four grandchildren are white and therefore statistically not likely to be assaulted and murdered by a **vigilante** or “bad apple cop,” that doesn’t stop me from feeling all the fear, horror, and despair when any children of any color are murdered in those situations. Don’t you feel the same? Using the excuse that “I felt threatened” opens the door to much more senseless violence than we already have. And we already have too much.

Let us go in the right direction, not the wrong direction. We should be working together to end the nightmares, not increase them.

As a concerned citizen and grandmother, I ask you please to withdraw consideration of HB 796. I urge you to vote against it if it comes to a vote.