

Testimony on House Bill 425
House Federalism Committee
Rep. John Becker, Chair
Rep. Reggie Stoltzfus, Vice Chair
Rep. Adam C. Miller, Ranking Member

Submitted by:

Brenda R. Clark

Chair Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Federalism Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on House Bill 425. My name is Brenda Clark and I am speaking to you today as a concerned private citizen, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, retired K-12 educator, a *gun owner*, and retired adjunct professor at The Ohio State University College of Public Health. Although I will be using public health in my testimony today, I need to be clear in stating that I am speaking on my own behalf as a private citizen and not as a representative of OSU.

Allow me to start by sharing a conversation I had recently with my daughter-in-law during an hour-long car ride to my grandson's soccer game. I asked if she had heard about HB 425, a bill that would allow people to carry a gun in public without a permit AND without any safety training. Being a working mother of 3 young children, my very busy daughter-in-law typically prefers to focus her attention on her family and to leave the politics to someone else. But this time her reaction was different. In shocked disbelief, she burst out: "What?!" You gotta be kidding me!! Why - why would they do that?! What can I do?"

At that point, I realized that my daughter-in-law is likely only ONE of thousands of your constituents across this state who have absolutely no idea that while they are going to work and managing hectic family lives every day, their representatives in the Ohio legislature are trying to pass a law with provisions that we know - and I would expect all of you to know - that most people oppose. In fact, 88% of Americans think you should get a permit before carrying a concealed handgun in public¹. Further, in a recent national

survey², 85%, regardless of political affiliation, agreed that concealed carry holders should pass a test demonstrating they can safely and lawfully handle a gun.

That leaves only about 15% of all of us who actually favor the provisions of HB 425, which would essentially gut current concealed carry laws.

Additionally, this bill is being considered in spite of sobering statistics against it. Several states that have passed permitless carry legislation have seen substantial increases in firearm violence, with Alaska being the most alarming at 82% over the past 14 years^{3,4} and Missouri⁵ seeing a 25% increase in just one year.

If HB 425 passes, Ohio will likely experience a similar outcome. This could have perilous public health impacts for our state, considering that Ohio's gun death rate has already been increasing⁶ and has now surged ahead of the overall US rate⁷.

I return again to my daughter-in-law's question: Why **WOULD** our legislators pass this bill? Why would they even consider a bill that would put more guns into the hands of more people who know less about how to safely and properly use them?

This is a question I ponder as well. I ask it:

- as a grandmother and great-grandmother with 10 grandkids in preschool – college. After the Parkland massacre, my kindergarten-age granddaughter asked my daughter-in-law, “This isn't going to happen in my school, is it Mommy?”
- as a former high school teacher where I spent my last year (SY1996-1997) in the classroom this way: 8th period of each school day, the first thing I did was to check to be sure the student who sat in the last seat of the first row was present. Without going into great detail, this student had known violent tendencies, and if his name was not on the absence list for that day, I had to immediately call the main office, at which point they would have put the school on lock down and conducted a search until they found the missing student. This was pre-Columbine. I have grieved with

each senseless mass shooting, but especially those that have taken the lives of innocent school children.

- as a college professor. I was in the classroom the day of the attack on OSU campus in November of 2016. We were so fortunate that injuries were not like those we've seen on other college campuses. It would have been much worse had a gun been the weapon.
- as a resident of the city of Westerville, a community that knows firsthand the horror and heartbreak of losing two beloved police officers, Eric Joering and Anthony Morelli, to gun violence. Had this confrontation occurred in public, under permitless carry, these officers would have had no way of knowing whether the shooter could lawfully carry a firearm and thus no way of arresting him.
- and finally, as a responsible gun owner. Knowing many others like myself, I fully embrace the importance of training and how essential it is for the police to know who can legally carry a gun or not, in order to be able to enforce our laws and keep us safe. Requiring a permit to conceal carry my gun in public—if I were to choose to do so—does nothing to inhibit my constitutional rights, and rather is essential to respect the rights of others to public safety.

Why **WOULD** we pass a bill that increases the chances that senseless tragedies will not only continue to occur but are likely to occur at increasing rates? That's a question I hope this committee will seriously consider.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully,
Brenda R. Clark

References:

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3. Crime Reported in Alaska 2003. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Department of Public Safety, Statewide Services. <https://bit.ly/2Hy475w>. Rates were calculated using population data from the United States Census Bureau.
4. Crime in Alaska 2017. Anchorage, AK. Alaska Department of Public Safety, Statewide Services. <https://bit.ly/2G0nq4R>. Rates were calculated using population data from the United States Census bureau. Rates were calculated using population data from the United States Census Bureau.
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6. Figures released Dec. 2018. <https://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10.html>.
7. <https://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10.html>