

Testimony on House Bill 227
House Government Oversight Committee
June 16, 2021

Submitted by:
Lisa Voigt

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB 227. My name is Lisa Voigt, and I am speaking to you today as a concerned private citizen, mother, and professor at The Ohio State University. A few years ago I heard Dr. Cassandra Crifasi, a gun owner and a gun policy researcher, give a lecture at OSU's Glenn School of Public Affairs.¹ Dr. Crifasi referred to her research on the repeal of Missouri's permit-to-purchase handgun law in 2007, which resulted in a 25% increase in firearm homicides;² more recently, since Missouri's passage of permitless carry in January 2017, the city of St. Louis has experienced another 25% increase in aggravated assaults with a gun.³ Statistics on the rates of aggravated assaults with firearms in Alaska and Arizona, which passed permitless carry bills in 2003 and 2010, respectively, show similarly shocking and cautionary results.⁴ When I asked Dr. Crifasi about the most effective policies to reduce gun violence, she clearly stated that by far the most important policy—since it is so well demonstrated in the research on states where permitting laws have changed—is *strong* permitting requirements. Repealing those requirements, as HB 227 would do, is also opposed by vast majorities of the population: 88% of Americans (Strategies 360 Survey, March 2015), 90% of Ohioans (Survey USA, March 2016), and 81% of gun owners (Public Policy Polling, May 2018). In other words, the current law that enjoys such vast popular support is also the one that happens to be in the best interest of public safety.

¹ Dr. Cassandra Crifasi is “one of the few gun policy researchers in the nation who not only owns guns but regularly shoots for sport... Crifasi, 34, is part of what she calls ‘the large moderate swath that is invisible’: those who believe the Second Amendment protects citizens’ right to have a firearm in their home, but also believe that right should be regulated by effective, evidence-based gun policy” (<https://magazine.jhsph.edu/2017/fall/features/cassandra-crifasi-hopkins-moderate-gun-owner-gun-policy-researcher/index.html>).

² <https://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2014/repeal-of-missouris-background-law-associated-with-increase-in-states-murders.html>

³ http://www.slmpd.org/crimestats/CRM0013-BY_201712.pdf

⁴ Aggravated assaults with a gun increased 65% in Alaska after the passage of permitless carry in 2003 (465 more aggravated assaults with a gun per year), and 8% in Arizona (921 more aggravated assaults with a gun per year) <https://everytownresearch.org/permitless-carry/>

In hearings on permitless carry bills like HB 227 in previous General Assemblies, I was struck by the common ground between many of the proponents' arguments and the ones you will hear from opponents. Many proponents acknowledged that the government has the authority to regulate constitutionally guaranteed rights, including those of the Second Amendment. As Justice Scalia stated in the *Heller* decision, "like most rights, the right secured by the Second Amendment is not unlimited" and it is "not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose."⁵ And almost all of the proponents I heard described the importance of training to operate a gun safely—the training that this bill would no longer require. I don't think I heard any complaints at all about that training being onerous or difficult (in fact, I heard more comments about how insufficient 8 hours of training was). This opinion about the importance of training seems to be shared by many of the commentators on a Buckeye Firearms Facebook post I saw about this bill during the last General Assembly—including teachers who surely understand its importance and function a great deal more than I do. Some described how their experiences teaching showed them how little some gun owners—even ones who had been shooting their whole lives—knew about safely handling a gun or about the rules, laws, ethics or consequences of carrying firearms. For this reason, they expressed strong opposition to the bill. They sounded a lot like a comment I read in a news article from 2020 about a bill in Tennessee that dropped permit and training requirements for guns kept in vehicles, which has led to more than double the number of guns stolen from vehicles since 2015. Representative Hardaway, one of that bill's co-sponsors, said, "It didn't cross my mind that we would have that many stupid people with weapons in their cars... These are the unintended consequences that we have an obligation to go back and fix."⁶ I hope that you will not have to live with the same regrets about unintended consequences.

Finally, as one proponent of the previous General Assembly's permitless carry bill testified, "Are there people that should not own guns because of their offenses?"

⁵ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/07-290.ZO.html>

⁶ <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/09/717178960/more-guns-in-cars-mean-more-guns-stolen-from-cars>. See also this statement by Stanford University Professor John J. Donahue III: "There are certainly beneficial uses of guns by permit holders that thwart or even deter crime, but these positive influences are outweighed by all of the ways—often not well understood—in which gun carrying elevates violent crime. In addition to any misconduct by the actual permit holder—such as the mass shooting in 2017 that killed five and wounded six others in the baggage claim area at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood Airport—*gun carrying often leads to lost and stolen guns and occupies the time and complicates the task of law enforcement in ways that undermine their crime-fighting capacities*" (<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/arming-teachers-is-not-a-good-option/?redirect=1>, Feb. 28, 2018, my emphasis).

Absolutely.” Those of us testifying in opposition could not agree more. Surely such people include those charged with felonies and convicted of misdemeanor or negligent assault, domestic violence, and resisting arrest offenses. If this bill passes, those offenses would no longer prohibit people from carrying a concealed weapon in public; for that matter, enforcing federal law that would continue to prohibit some people from having a firearm would be difficult if not impossible for a police officer to do without a permit.

In sum, if the members of the committee and most sponsors and proponents of the bill agree that the government has the authority to regulate constitutionally guaranteed rights; if current regulations are causing no harm to individuals; if removing them *would* cause great deal of harm to individuals and to public safety, as has been amply demonstrated in other states; and if we are currently in the midst of a public health crisis, with over 1500 Ohioans dying every year from guns, which represents a 34% increase from 2010 to 2019, double the national average⁷: then I cannot fathom why this committee has chosen to hear this bill once again, although I suppose the absurdity of it explains why it was added to the agenda with only 24 hours of public notice (when 24 hours before is usually the deadline to submit testimony). For the safety of all your constituents, please oppose this dangerous bill and drop it once and for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Voigt

⁷ <https://everystat.org/#Ohio>