



Springfield Police Division
Office of the Chief of Police
130 N. Fountain Ave.
Springfield, OH 45502-1186
springfieldohio.gov
(937) 324-7720



Wednesday, 8 December, 2021

Testimony in Support of H.B. 383 by Springfield, Ohio Chief of Police, Lee Graf

Chairman Wilken, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, good morning and thank you for allowing me to come before you to offer testimony concerning House Bill 383.

My name is Lee Graf and I serve as the Chief of Police for the Springfield Police Division in Springfield, located in Clark County, Ohio. I am a 25-year veteran of the Springfield Police Division. Before being appointed as Chief, 4 years ago, I had spent most of my career in Uniform Patrol. In my capacity as a street officer, I have seen firsthand the devastation brought upon our community by gun violence.

In line with statistics throughout Ohio and the nation, the Springfield community has seen a dramatic rise in gun violence and criminal gun use over the last 2 years. From 2019 to 2020, gun crimes and incidents involving firearms rose 27% in Springfield. Though on a slightly downward trend, the occurrence of these incidents in 2021 are still close to the numbers we saw in 2020.

All gun crimes are of concern, but the crimes of violence have the most devastating impacts in our communities. It should be understood that a significant percentage of gun violence is perpetrated by a small percentage of recidivist criminals, particularly in the back and forth cycles of retaliation shootings. Often, these individuals have been convicted of past crimes that have placed them under Weapons Disability in regards to firearms possession.

The vast majority of persons that law enforcement encounters who are under Weapons Disability are in that status due to past criminal convictions, whether for committing felony offenses of violence, or for participating in the criminal drug trade.

Since 2017, the Springfield Police Division has arrested and charged 212 individuals for Having Weapons While Under Disability. Of that number thirteen (or six percent) were repeat offenders of this crime during that five year period. Doing a deeper dive, looking at their "lifetime" charges in Clark County for Having Weapons While Under Disability (and please note that I only researched Springfield's county, these individuals may have Disability charges in other counties in Ohio); eight individuals had been charged on two separate occasions, one individual was charged on three separate occasions, one individual was charged on four separate occasions, two individuals were charged on five separate occasions, and one individual was charged on six separate occasions. Of

those individuals with three or more arrests, we see past convictions for Discharge of a Firearm On or Near Prohibited Premises, Possession of a Stolen Vehicle, Felony Fleeing, Drug Trafficking, Aggravated Burglary, Aggravated Robbery, Abduction, and Felonious Assault.

House Bill 383 is a viable attempt to take repeat criminal gun offenders under Disability off our streets, thereby protecting citizens and our communities. It targets individuals who, despite past attempts to modify their behavior, continue to present a threat to our society, to our citizens. I would be remiss if I did not also note the risk this poses to our law enforcement officers.

It should also be noted that the modifications to Having Weapons While Under Disability outlined in House Bill 383 concern criminal behavior in our State. This bill does not compromise the rights of law-abiding citizens. As a defender of the Constitutions of this great State and our Nation, I am an advocate for the peoples' right to bear arms. I would not be testifying before you if I felt this bill threatened those rights – it does not.

In closing, I feel that House Bill 383, if passed, would help law enforcement and the courts take recidivist criminal gun offenders off the streets – breaking the cycles of violence that these individuals often engage in. By giving us these tools, we make Ohio safer.

Chairman Wilkin, thank you for allowing me to speak before you and the Committee today. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

Respectfully submitted,



Chief Lee E. Graf