

Testimony in Opposition to SB 215, February 17, 2022

Tamara Melnick

Dear committee members, my name is Tamara Melnick and I am a resident of Jackson Township in Stark County, Ohio. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am sharing my testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 215, a bill which would allow unvetted, untrained individuals to concealed carry in public.

I became personally concerned with the effects of gun violence and negligent gun ownership last year after the incident at Jackson Memorial Middle School, the school which my daughter now attends. Friends, neighbors, and classmates were there that day, and we experienced first hand the devastation that gun violence brings to a community. My husband is a primary care doctor in Canton and has personally witnessed how firearms related injuries have lifelong consequences for his patients and their families.

States that have enacted permitless carry have seen an increase in gun related incidents. Research has shown that weaker concealed carry laws are correlated with an increase in both assaults and unintentional gun injuries. It is common sense, as well as statistical fact that people who carry a gun without any training are more likely to accidentally injure themselves and others.

Surveys of crime victims and analyses of shooting incidents provide little evidence that using a gun in self-defense is effective in preventing injuries. A gun in the hands of someone who is not trained in its use, no matter how well-intentioned, will only increase the risk in a situation, and will not make anyone safer.

Training and licensing requirements ensure that the decision to carry is done with due consideration of the law and the consequences of using a gun in public.

There is no research that supports any public safety benefit to permitless carry. Surveys have indicated that 88% of Americans support a licensing requirement for concealed carry, and 90% of Ohioans support a licensing requirement. Anecdotally, everyone I have told about this bill, regardless of political affiliation or gun ownership, is horrified that our legislators would even consider doing away with training and licensing for concealed carry. House Bill 178 is not a bill that is supported by the vast majority of the public.

Not all gun related crimes or accidents can be prevented. That does not mean that we should never try to prevent any. Ohio is not so unique that we cannot learn from the example of other states. We have a chance to avert a course that will only lead to more Ohio families suffering from the aftereffects of gun deaths and injuries. That is why I urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 215.

Sources:

Everytown for Gun Safety. 2019. PERMITLESS CARRY: Concealed Carry in Public with No Permit and No Training. <https://everytownresearch.org/permitless-carry/>

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Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. 2017. Concealed Carry of Firearms: Fact vs. Fiction. https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-gun-policy-and-research/_archive-2019/_pdfs/concealed-carry-of-firearms.pdf

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