



Kandy Fatheree, Sheriff

As Sheriff of the fourth largest county in the State of Ohio, I write today in opposition to SB 215. I am greatly alarmed by the dangerous consequences of this bill should it become law.

By granting anyone over the age of 21 the right to carry a concealed firearm without first obtaining a concealed carry permit, this bill strips away the basic minimum training requirements and criminal vetting that have been the standard protocol in our state for decades.

Under ORC 2923.125, in conjunction with ORC 2923.13, current Ohio law prevents individuals who are fugitives from justice, under indictment for any felony offense, convicted of a drug offense, in danger of drug dependence or being a chronic alcoholic, or found to be mentally incompetent from possessing a firearm. In 2017, the most recent year for which data from the Office of Criminal Justice Services is available, Ohio ranked 9th in the nation amongst states conducting criminal background checks for firearms.¹ Of the checks conducted, 4,336 concealed carry applications were denied.² Of the various reason for denial, 38% were because the applicant had prior felony convictions, and another 19% were because the applicant had either been convicted of a misdemeanor offense of domestic violence or was the respondent of a civil protection order.³

In Ohio today, nearly three out of every four murders committed involved the use of a firearm.⁴ If passed, SB 215 would further expand the right to conceal a firearm to *all* individuals 21 years and older, regardless of their criminal history, mental health status, or history of drug or alcohol abuse. This will most certainly lead to an increase in gun violence and death.

SB 215 also expands the scope of weapons that Ohio residents would be allowed to carry concealed. Under current Ohio law, it is a violation of ORC 2923.12 to carry a

¹ Office of Criminal Justice Services, "Gun Violence, Ohio Data," Page 3, www.ocjs.ohio.gov/links/ocjs-NICS-GunViolenceReport.pdf

² "Gun Violence, Ohio Data," Page 4

³ "Gun Violence, Ohio Data," Page 4

⁴ FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "2019 Crime in the United States," Table 20, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/tables/table-20>





Kandy Fatheree, Sheriff

concealed deadly weapon other than a handgun. SB 215 will act as a repeal of this law, allowing individuals to conceal carry *any* non-restricted deadly weapon capable of fitting under their clothing. Of the long list of dangerous ordnances on the list of "restricted firearms," the only stabbing weapon that is restricted are ballistic knives. Meaning, any stabbing or cutting weapon capable of fitting under one's clothing, other than a ballistic knife, would be legal to conceal carry, should SB 215 pass.

Further, SB 215 would also eliminate the protections provided in ORC 2923.125 that require all applicants for a concealed carry license to be trained in the laws of self-defense, the safe handling of the firearm, and the successful demonstration of marksmanship competency to accurately hit a desired target. These training requirements serve a very important function, protecting not only the gunowner and their family, but also the public at large.

Under current law, if an officer runs a citizen's identifying information through a law enforcement database, they will receive a notice if the individual possesses a concealed carry license. With the elimination of concealed carry licensing that is being proposed in SB 215, law enforcement would no longer have that advance knowledge before interacting with a citizen. To make matters worse, SB 215 also eliminates the requirement that an individual carrying a concealed firearm inform law enforcement that they are in possession of one. As a County Sheriff with over 400 deputies and special deputies under my command, I cannot begin to express how disturbing I find these proposed changes to be.

Law enforcement agencies go to painstaking lengths to ensure that their officers are as informed and safe as possible while on patrol. I cannot fathom why those who authored and support this bill would want to leave thousands of members of law enforcement across the State of Ohio in such a vulnerable and potentially dangerous position.

In 2019, 42% of officers assaulted in the State of Ohio were assaulted using a firearm, knife, or other cutting instrument or deadly weapon.⁵ By eliminating

⁵FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "2019 Law Enforcement Officers Killed & Assaulted," Table 86, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/leoka/2019/topic-pages/tables/table-86.xls>





Kandy Fatheree, Sheriff

concealed carry training, background checks, and law enforcement disclosure, the number of officers assaulted with a firearm or other concealed deadly weapon will most assuredly increase. It's no small wonder that the state's largest police organization, the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio, also stands in firm opposition to this bill.

If SB 215 becomes law, every resident of Ohio must assume that every other resident with whom they come into contact (including criminals, addicts, and the mentally ill) is potentially carrying a dangerous weapon concealed on their person, and may not have even the minimum training in order to use it. Every show of aggression experienced through the normal course of daily life will carry with it the very real possibility that it may erupt into a life-threatening encounter. Every officer undertaking a traffic stop must assume that the individual they are about to encounter is potentially concealing a deadly weapon that they will not know about until it is too late.

A proposed piece of legislation such as SB 215 may be mere words on paper to its authors and supporters, but in the world of law enforcement it will manifest itself in the form of dangerous and potentially deadly consequences.

As a Sheriff, it is my duty to protect and serve the citizens of our state, and to protect the deputies under my command. I cannot in good faith support a legislative proposal that allows untrained, unvetted and potentially dangerous individuals to carry a concealed weapon, and that puts my deputies at an unsafe disadvantage when confronting such individuals.

I urge the members of the Ohio General Assembly to reject this legislation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kandy Fatheree".

Kandy Fatheree
Sheriff, Summit County,
Ohio

