

February 16, 2022
Government Oversight and Reform Committee
1 Capitol Square Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Opposition to SB 215, the "Permitless Carry" bill

Submitted by: Julia Elkus, Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White and Ranking Member Brown:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 215. My name is Julia Elkus and I am a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio. I am writing today to express my opposition to this bill which flies in the face of commonsense when gun violence and firearm-related deaths are at record levels in Ohio.

My sister-in-law was on the second floor of Fifth Third bank in 2018 when a gunman shot and killed three people in the lobby below her. Her dear friend was trapped in a revolving door where she became a sitting duck for the gunman and was shot 12 times; it's a miracle she lived. Of course, guns used illegally are not the only ones that are deadly. Hundreds of Americans are injured or killed every year in tragic situations where guns are used inappropriately, inaccurately or are fired accidentally. In Ohio, the rate of gun deaths increased 34% from 2010 to 2019, twice the national average. And tragically, guns are the leading cause of death among children in Ohio. In 2019, 142 children and teens died from firearms – that's approximately one death every 2.5 days.

There is simply no denying that guns have devastated the lives of thousands of innocent people. As you well know, gun violence trends continue unabated, as we witness dramatic increases in gun injury and death in Ohio and around the country. In acting on behalf of its citizens, the Ohio state legislature should be doing everything in its power to prevent the tragic injuries and deaths associated with firearms. Instead, this bill absolves those who wish to carry concealed weapons from the most basic responsibilities associated with that right, thereby increasing the risk of harm to everyone else.

One responsibility eliminated by this bill is the requirement for 8 hours of training in firearms use. In contrast, I have a daughter who is in the midst of her 10th YEAR of medical training (an estimated 30,000 hours). She has one more year to go. All so that she serves her patients with care and *does no harm*. Is there anything that can do more harm in less time than a loaded gun? Is it too much to ask that those who wish to carry a concealed weapon train for one DAY?

Boaters in Ohio are required to complete an education course and then carry a boater education card with them when on the water. Education and a permit. These are deemed necessary for safety purposes. In 2019 there were 13 boating related fatalities. How can you justify waiving these most basic standards, education and a permit, for those who carry a loaded gun when there were **1,500** deaths in 2019 related to firearms?

With rights come responsibilities. The right to carry a concealed weapon should not supersede my right (or that of any Ohioan) to feel safe in my own community. Obtaining a permit and receiving training are commonsense requirements that reduce the inherent risk associated with carrying and concealing a deadly weapon. These safeguards do nothing to infringe upon the right to bear arms – they only reduce the risk of harm to innocent citizens by creating a mechanism for identifying those with criminal records who should *not be allowed* to carry a concealed weapon, and for ensuring that those who do carry hidden, loaded firearms have at least a minimal amount of training. It makes no sense to abandon all safety measures and remove any responsibility from individuals who carry loaded guns in public – especially guns no one can see or protect themselves from. In the Supreme Court's *Heller* decision, conservative Justice Scalia reminded us that it is “not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose.” Again – with rights come responsibilities!

According to a March 2016 survey, 90 percent of Ohio voters support requiring a permit to carry a concealed handgun in public. Every single day in Ohio firearms devastate the lives of the citizens it is your duty to protect. It is long past time for you, our legislative leaders, to do something to help end the current epidemic of death from firearms. Rather than focus on legislation that dilutes the few guardrails in place to reduce this devastation, this body should be seeking **solutions to safeguard its constituents**. How might we eliminate the loopholes that allow felons to buy guns? How might we enable family members who know their loved ones are unstable to keep guns out of the hands of those individuals? How can we protect innocent children now that we live in a country that is saturated with lethal firearms? **I respectfully ask that you focus on protecting the safety of all Ohioans by opposing this bill that absolves concealed weapons carriers of the most basic of responsibilities, and instead focus on legislation that can make Ohio a safer place to live for children and families.**

Respectfully,

Julia Elkus