

Ohio House Government Oversight Committee Member,

The December 14, 2021 hearing of the Ohio Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, for Senate Bill 215 (proposed permitless concealed carry legislation), began with a moment of silence on the nine-year anniversary of Sandy Hook, where 20 children and 6 adults were shot and killed. The hearing ended with a 5-2 vote to support SB 215 to remove the requirement for training and background checks for concealed weapons. What a tragic and horrible irony.

As you are aware, House Bill 227 and SB 215 are similar versions of proposed legislation that waive current required permitting, background checks, and eight-hour training to carry a concealed handgun in Ohio. These bills also eliminate the current requirement for pulled-over drivers to “promptly” inform a police officer of the legal presence of a concealed handgun in the vehicle. Both SB 215 and HB 227 lack simple common sense and place all Ohioans - especially our law enforcement - at increased risk.

I live in Toledo, Ohio and, between July 2020 and January 2021 two Toledo police officers were shot and killed in the line of duty; one of those officers was killed by a gun that was not owned by the shooter. In 2021, the Toledo Police Department confiscated 1,400 guns when they normally acquire 1,100. In just the last four months, in Lucas County, 23% of defendants who committed weapons violations were carrying without a license. If HB 227 and SB 215 are passed, this offense would no longer be illegal. Why would you consider removing the legislation and tools that allow our police to get these weapons out of the wrong hands and off our streets?

In January 2022, the New York Police Department had four police officers shot and killed in the line of duty by illegally owned guns. Texas recently had two police officers shot and killed in the line of duty. Nationwide, Police officers are grieving and pleading for a stop to these shootings and for laws to help restrict and regulate guns. As Dominique Luzuriaga, widow of NYPD Officer Jason Rivera, said during the eulogy of her husband, “The system continues to fail us; we are not safe anymore...”

Think about this: Ohio residents must license their dogs; we must get a driver’s permit, complete 50 hours of driving with an instructor, and take a test to get a driver’s license; we must license our vehicles; and I must have an FBI fingerprint report done every 5 years to keep my job in a public school. Why are licenses, training, or background checks required for these items but not required for the purchase, possession, or use of a deadly weapon?

Ohio is already experiencing a shortage of police officers due to the increased scrutiny, low morale, and limited on-the-job protection. How would passage of SB 215 or HB 227 encourage anyone to consider law enforcement as a career?

Please, do not make Ohio part of a system that fails our police officers, their families, and the citizens they are sworn to protect. Vote NO on SB 215 and HB 227.

Respectfully,
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Toledo, Ohio