



OHIO HOUSE GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
OPPOSITION TESTIMONY TO SENATE BILL 215
FEBRUARY 17, 2022

Chair Wilkin, Vice-Chair White, Ranking Member Brown, and distinguished members of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee, my name is Keary McCarthy, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Mayors Alliance. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 215. I do so today on behalf of Ohio's largest bipartisan coalition of mayors, and in support of our local law enforcement professionals and first responders who have raised serious concerns about the impacts of repealing Ohio's concealed carry permitting law.

Through our Mayors and Police Chiefs Leadership Committee we have discussed the potential impacts of SB 215 on the safety of our officers and our communities. We have also discussed this issue with the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ohio Fraternal Order of Police. Together, we have written a joint letter that outlines our shared concerns and have distributed it to all members of the General Assembly. As you will see in this joint letter and in the testimony below, we oppose SB 215 because it has the potential to threaten officer safety, limits our ability to prevent crime and keep guns out of the hands of criminals, and risks making our communities less safe.

The proposed law changes in SB 215 threaten officer safety because of the fundamental changes to the *duty to notify* provisions for those carrying a concealed firearm. Police officers face uncertainty and potentially life-threatening danger every day. The current *duty to promptly notify* for concealed carry license holders is one small step to help reduce that uncertainty and keep police officers safe. It also helps to establish an important distinction between lawful gun owners and those who are illegally concealing a weapon. Switching the burden to police – who already have a list of questions to ask – to inquire if the person is carrying would unnecessarily make the already difficult job of police officers more difficult and potentially lead to dangerous mistakes.

These changes in law would also make it more difficult for police officers to prevent crime and take illegal guns out of the hands of criminals. This is because law enforcement would be prohibited from stopping a suspicious individual with a firearm. It would also prevent officers from temporarily seizing a firearm during an investigative detention, which would senselessly endanger our law enforcement professionals. Furthermore, the proposed law change would require officers to make an unknowable determination if a suspect is "law-abiding" before an investigation even occurs.

Lastly, communities across the state and country are seeing an increase in gun violence. Illegal guns in the hands of criminals have contributed to a record number of homicides in some communities. We believe that allowing even more individuals to carry concealed weapons with no training or background check, and few ways to address those who may be illegally carrying, will result in more gun violence in our communities.

There is no doubt that Ohio's current concealed carry law has prevented individuals from carrying concealed weapons that shouldn't have them. In 2020, over 2,000 concealed carry licenses were revoked, and 1,777 licenses were denied by sheriffs' offices throughout Ohio. If Ohio's concealed carry licensing laws are repealed, there will be very few safeguards to prevent potentially dangerous individuals, including by those previously convicted of misdemeanor assaults on police officers, from carrying a concealed firearm.

We know there are areas of common ground when it comes to public safety. We look forward to continuing the difficult work we must do together to keep Ohio and all her communities safe. However, repealing Ohio's concealed carry permitting laws would be a dangerous step in the wrong direction that will make our communities less safe. We sincerely believe that if this law should pass, it has the potential to threaten officer safety, limits law enforcements' ability to prevent crime and keep guns out of the hands of those who shouldn't have them, and risks increasing gun violence in our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this very significant change in Ohio law and share with you our concerns about the potential impact it could have on our cities and all of Ohio's local communities. I would be happy to take any questions at this time.