

**Testimony on SB215**  
House Government and Oversight Committee  
March 1, 2022

Submitted by:  
Rebecca Gorski

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brown and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Rebecca Gorski and I am a resident of Chester Township in Geauga County. I am speaking today to oppose SB 215, a dangerous permitless carry bill which would jeopardize public safety in Ohio.

As elected representatives of Ohio residents, your job is to solve problems Ohioans are experiencing. In an average year, 1600 Ohioans die by gun.<sup>1</sup> According to CDC data, 2020 and 2021 were record setting years for gun deaths in our state.<sup>2</sup> Sadly, firearms are now the leading cause of death of children.<sup>3</sup> We don't need to say there will be blood on the streets if SB 215 is passed into law; there already is blood in our neighborhoods, outside of bars and restaurants, in our homes, and on our roads. With more guns, more places, and less training, SB 215 will further jeopardize our safety.

Gun sales surged nationwide in recent years, including an estimated 800,000 guns sold here in Ohio in 2020.<sup>4</sup> A study conducted between January 2019 and April 2021 found an estimated 7.5 million adults in the U.S. became first-time gun owners over that timeframe. 5.4 million of the new gun owners had been living in homes without guns. These newly purchased weapons exposed the gun owner as well as more than 11 million people – including 5 million children – to the dangers associated with living in homes with guns. The addition of a gun increases the risk of dying a violent death dramatically, not just for the gun owner, but also for other members of the household.<sup>5</sup>

So, we have more guns. Now, let's start with the assumption that if we eliminate the permit requirement for concealed carry more people will carry hidden guns in more public spaces, including in their cars. That seems to be intuitively obvious, and in fact it would seem to be the **actual point of the bill**, a feature, not a bug. Let's further assume that the vast majority of these people are well-intentioned, law-abiding citizens who, despite scientific evidence to the contrary, genuinely believe that carrying a gun makes them and the people around them safer. (The research on this topic by public health experts shows exactly the opposite, but let's leave that aside for the moment.) So now we're not talking about criminals who will commit crimes no matter what the law is. We're talking about regular, everyday people who are, as evidenced by

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<sup>1</sup> EveryStat. "How does gun violence impact the communities you care about?" Accessed on February 26, 2022. [everystat.org/#Ohio](https://everystat.org/#Ohio).

<sup>2</sup> Zuckerman, Jake. "Ohio gun deaths in 2021 near an all time high." *Ohio Capital Journal*. February 18, 2022. <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2022/02/18/ohio-gun-deaths-in-2021-near-an-all-time-high/>

<sup>3</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. "Firearms are the leading cause of death for American children and teens." Everytown Research & Policy. Accessed on February 26, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Raudins, Sam. "Gun sales surged in 2020, mirroring rising US demand." *The Columbus Dispatch*. February 22, 2021.

<https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/local/2021/02/22/ohio-gun-sales-soar-2020-amid-pandemic-unrest-mirroring-u-s-trend/4378728001/>

<sup>5</sup> Miller, Matthew. Azrael, Deborah. (2022). "Firearm Purchasing During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Results from the 2021 National Firearms Survey." *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

their perceived need to carry a concealed gun, full of fear and suspicion, moving through the world armed with a deadly weapon.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol reported a steep increase in road rage incidents in 2021.<sup>6</sup> Across the US, road rage shootings now kill or injure someone every 18 hours.<sup>7</sup> Research has found that guns are “disproportionately owned by people who are prone to angry, impulsive behavior.”<sup>8</sup> With SB 215, these gun owners would no longer be required to complete safety training. It’s worth noting between 2016 and 2019, roughly one-third of road rage incidents involving a gun resulted in death. Between 2020 and 2021, half of road rage incidents resulted in death.<sup>9</sup> For example, a few headlines:

- **9-year-old boy shot in chest by father after alleged road rage incident<sup>10</sup>**
- **Hamilton County Coroner releases name of I-275 road rage shooting victim<sup>11</sup>**
- **Canton man injured in shooting after road rage incident<sup>12</sup>**

Eliminating the permit requirement for concealed carry in Ohio would doubtlessly lead to more concealed guns being carried, and inevitably to more arguments ending in gunshots. It also seems intuitive that more people carrying more guns in more places, sometimes without adequate training will also lead to more mistakes, such as unintentional shootings, or guns left in bathrooms, etc. For example, a few headlines:

- **Man accidentally shoots himself in face at local gun range<sup>13</sup>** – in my home of Geauga County. My County Sheriff is quoted in the cited article speaking about the importance of training and has been quoted against permitless carry, including opposing previous versions of this bill.<sup>14</sup> In fact, opposition from area law enforcement and sheriffs is the reason my State Senator, Senator Cirino, gave when he voted against SB 215.

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<sup>6</sup> Carloss, Tracy. “Road rage incidents up in Ohio and many Northeast Ohio counties, OSHP says.” November 1, 2021,

[www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/road-rage-incidents-up-in-ohio-and-many-northeast-ohio-counties-oshp-says](http://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/road-rage-incidents-up-in-ohio-and-many-northeast-ohio-counties-oshp-says)

<sup>7</sup> Lonas, Lexi. “Road rage shootings kill or injure someone every 18 hours: analysis.” *The Hill*. June 21, 2021.

[thehill.com/policy/transportation/automobiles/558141-road-rage-shootings-kill-or-injure-someone-every-18](https://thehill.com/policy/transportation/automobiles/558141-road-rage-shootings-kill-or-injure-someone-every-18)

<sup>8</sup> Swanson, J. W., Sampson, N. A., Petukhova, M. V., Zaslavsky, A. M., Appelbaum, P. S., Swartz, M. S., and Kessler, R. C. (2015), Guns, Impulsive Angry Behavior, and Mental Disorders: Results from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R). *Behav. Sci. Law*, 33, 199– 212.

<sup>9</sup> Burd-Sharps, Sarah. Bistline, Kathryn. June 30, 2021. “Reports of road rage shootings are on the rise.” Everytown Research & Policy. [everytownresearch.org/reports-of-road-rage-shootings-are-on-the-rise/](https://everytownresearch.org/reports-of-road-rage-shootings-are-on-the-rise/)

<sup>10</sup> Haworth, John. “9-year-old boy accidentally shot in chest by father after alleged road rage incident.” ABC News. June 13, 2021.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/year-boy-accidentally-shot-chest-father-alleged-road/story?id=78249887>

<sup>11</sup> Weiter, Taylor. Bethel, BJ. Hamilton County Coroner releases name of I-275 road rage shooting victim. January 24, 2022. [www.wcpo.com/traffic/i-275-west-shut-down-at-blue-rock-road-for-police-activity](http://www.wcpo.com/traffic/i-275-west-shut-down-at-blue-rock-road-for-police-activity)

<sup>12</sup> Hlavaty, Kaylyn. “It’s just not worth it: Canton man injured in shooting after road rage incident, sheriff’s office says.” January 10, 2022.

[www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/akron-canton-news/its-just-not-worth-it-canton-man-injured-in-shooting-after-road-rage-incident-sheriffs-office-says](http://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/akron-canton-news/its-just-not-worth-it-canton-man-injured-in-shooting-after-road-rage-incident-sheriffs-office-says)

<sup>13</sup> Gallek, Peggy. “Man accidentally shoots himself in face at local gun range.” June 17, 2021. [fox8.com/news/accidental-shooting-at-gun-range-injured-man-geauga-county-sheriff-says/](https://fox8.com/news/accidental-shooting-at-gun-range-injured-man-geauga-county-sheriff-says/)

<sup>14</sup> Freeman, Kevin. “Ohio lawmakers propose bill to let residents carry concealed weapon without permit.” March 28, 2019.

<https://fox8.com/news/bill-in-ohio-would-allow-residents-to-carry-concealed-weapon-without-a-permit/>

- **More details revealed after accidental gunshot fired at Boardman Sam's Club<sup>15</sup>** – a child accessed her mother's concealed firearm while in a checkout line inside the store, de-activated the safety, and fired the handgun. The woman had a concealed carry permit.
- **Capitol Police leave gun unattended in Capitol bathroom, again<sup>16</sup>**

If even those practicing at a local gun range, concealed carry permit holders, and trained law enforcement unintentionally discharge their firearm, allow children to access their concealed weapon, or sometimes leave their guns behind, why would we expect untrained Ohioans to be less prone to any of this?

Supporters of permitless carry will tell you that criminals don't follow laws and this bill only impacts law abiding citizens. But, that argument doesn't match up with the reality on the ground. We should be clear that permitless carry could embolden criminals and make them feel more comfortable carrying in public. Our permitting system ensures people get a background check and some hands-on safety training, including actually firing a handgun, before carrying a firearm in our communities and around our families. What we must understand is that due to firearm sales by unlicensed sellers, Ohio's permitting system is the only background check a person carrying a firearm may ever receive. A permit is also the only way for police to know if someone is legally carrying a firearm.

Other opponents to this bill have shared statistics showing that states that have adopted permitless carry have increases in violent gun crimes specifically. I hope you pay attention to that. A majority of states require a permit to carry a concealed handgun.<sup>17</sup> SB 215 would put Ohio in a minority of states, including in the Midwest.

Please oppose SB 215 and any efforts at permitless carry, in support of public safety. I'm willing to answer any questions.

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<sup>15</sup> Brown, Brandon. "More details revealed after accidental gunshot fired at Boardman Sam's Club." October 19, 2020.

wfmj.com/story/42779848/more-details-revealed-after-accidental-gunshot-fired-at-boardman-sams-club

<sup>16</sup> Tully-McManus, Katherine. "Capitol Police left gun unattended in Capitol bathroom, again." *Roll Call*. February 17, 2019.

rollcall.com/2019/02/27/capitol-police-weapon-left-unattended-in-capitol-bathroom-again/

<sup>17</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. "Which states require a permit to conceal carry guns in public?" Everytown Research & Policy. Accessed on February 26, 2022.

<https://everytownresearch.org/law/concealed-carry-permit-required/>