

## Opposition Testimony on SB215

### Government Oversight Committee

March 2, 2022

Michelle Heym

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present my testimony again in opposition to SB215, a very dangerous and devious permitless carry bill. My ultimate desire is to come away from this hearing with a bipartisan agreement on Permitless Carry in Ohio, one which will keep all Ohioans safe from harm.

My name is Michelle Heym, and I am presently a wife and Mother living in Powell, Ohio, I feel very fortunate to live in a country where I am free to voice my opinion. We all want our friends and families to be safe. I personally am honored to testify, to show you that the evidence is clear that SB215 is dangerous. It will not keep people safe. It will not keep families safe. It will not keep police safe. It will not keep victims safe. This bill is Anti-public Safety, Anti-Police, Anti-Victim and Unconstitutional and will undoubtedly kill more Ohioans. You need to oppose SB215 today.

“A dangerous and destabilizing conflict”. Wait a second, Are we talking about the war in Ukraine, which is what everybody should be talking about right now, and trying to find solutions to stop the war, or the tension in this room with SB215. What are we talking about? Frankly it's hard to focus and pathetic.

So let's first talk about public safety and how SB215 is Anti-Public Safety. I was young mom living in Connecticut in December of 2012, when the massacre of innocent children occurred at Sandy Hook School. As a reminder, gunman killed HIS Mom, 26 children and teachers, and then himself at Sandy Hook Elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. So I know what it's like to be terrified as my children and niece were on lockdown closeby. They were babies! Those kids at Sandy Hook were in Kindergarten and first grade! And nobody in our federal government did anything. Well, for some reason my kids survived, and I survived, to speak for those that aren't with us, and I'm not letting you pass SB215 without advocating against such reckless bills.

Two weeks ago, the families of 9 victims reached a \$73 million dollar lawsuit against Remington, the gun manufacturer of the gun used to gun down these babies. The families and a survivor want to make gun companies more accountable for the sale and marketing of guns that should be used on a battlefield. Adam Lanza used an Bushmaster, AR15, semi-automatic rifle. Again, a weapon used in a war zone. And I want to make you, as lawmakers of the citizens of Ohio, I want to make you all accountable for the safety and well being of the public. So you all, as the Government Oversight committee, make sure, without a shadow of a doubt, as you oversee the landscape, that bills you are passing do not infringe on anybody's right to live in this state, based on the laws of this land.

In addressing Representatives Long's questions, it IS significant that Remington's insurance company settled as in legalese they were "insuring the entity that bought the assets and assumed the liabilities of the original

company, should not pay for the misdeeds of the original company, but their liable. As I said, if they are going to insure companies based on their trust that their products or services are worthy to be insured, this example proves that Remington's products were not worthy. The Remington settlement of \$73 million will not bring those babies back, but it should count as a blot against those gun manufacturers. Just to remind you Representative, my example is “a wake-up call to the United States, the extreme gun lobby, and legislators to take serious steps to reduce gun violence .”

I would like to repeat my case in point, Permitless carry laws are ANTI-PUBLIC SAFETY, allowing dangerous people to go unchecked, possibly armed with dangerous weapons used to inflict mass casualties, one's like Remington produced. Ones that should NEVER be on the streets. This is wrong and dangerous. These weapons should be outlawed, but until they are completely outlawed, we cannot have permitless carry laws go into effect in our state.

The question was brought up by Representative Kelly how my children were affected by this horrific massacre. We will all be forever changed, and we will speak for those that were killed.

Russ and I were terribly worried for my kids after Sandy Hook. We still are every single day my kids walk out the door. I have teenagers. You think I feel comfortable with my daughter at Ohio State, living off campus, or my 17 year old, going out with her friends. We live in Powell, you know how close that is to Columbus.

My husband had been given pistol when he was in college, and he went to Georgia Tech. He grew up around guns, went shooting as sport from time to time. He kept his gun in a locked case in a Fraternity. One of his fraternity brothers got drunk and belligerent, and threatened Russ that night. Later that night, someone snuck into Russ's room, it turned out not to be that guy who threatened him, but Russ said if Stand Your Ground laws were in effect, like they are here, and Permitless Carry laws were in effect, he was a law abiding citizen, he could have ruined his life. In a moment of anger or rage, a law abiding citizen can turn into a criminal, just like that.

My Mom reminded me how dangerous guns are by her brothers shooting in Pennsgrove, New Jersey. My Uncle Joey was shot with a "permitless gun" when he was 11 years old by a mentally deranged 14 year old boy who thought it was wonderful to tie up cats and burn them at the stake. Everyone knew he was crazy. If they had extreme Risk Protection orders, that gun could have been removed temporarily from from the house, or a mandatory safe storage law, that gun could have been locked. Ok so that was back in 1954, what? why arent there these laws? If my wonderful Uncle had been inhaling/exhaling, he could have been dead.

So how many homicides or school shootings have to happen before legislators in the Statehouse enact laws that will keep us safe? Well, Mayor Ginther doesn't want to wait. Tomorrow, there will be a resolution passed, Columbus City Council is opposing two dangerous bills at the Ohio Statehouse: SB215, Permitless Carry, and HB99, arming teachers in schools. Yesterday, Mayor Ginther declared gun violence a public emergency in our city, to join many other mayors in our state.

So, What are we doing? Are we going to work together or not?

We were all here for the passing of HB227. So we know where everyone stands. SB215 is anti-public safety allowing adults over 25, to carry a concealed weapon, without any background check, no training, and no permit. We know that guns can be purchased at gun shows, online and at illegal gun dealers across the country without a background check. This is dangerous. Maybe you don't realize, that there is the illegal trafficking of guns in our country, where people can bypass a thorough background check. Mayor Ginther has asked our President to include Columbus in We need mandatory background checks on all guns purchased in Ohio, and be an example to states across the country on how to begin to end gun violence. I'm not sure why you aren't making that happen, other than the fear, some of you have of the gun lobby.

Mayor Ginther, a longtime member of Mayors Against Illegal Guns, as he prioritizes taking action to address gun violence in Columbus.

- As a long time member of Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a nonpartisan group of more than 1,000 current and former

mayors across the country who implement and advocate for life-saving gun safety reforms, Mayor Ginther has shown his commitment to taking action to protect the people of Columbus. Why don't you all. He, Columbus City Council, and a task force committed to addressing gun violence at every level, and that includes the local level.

Gun violence is a major public safety issue as Ohio is experiencing a gun violence crisis of epic proportions, that's why in Columbus, we need to carefully look at Ginther in his local efforts and fighting against attempts to gut the few gun safety measures we have left in the statehouse.

IF asked about specific policies that the task force can pursue:

- Through proven methods like community violence intervention programs and enforcement strategies, to municipal-level gun safety actions, we can take meaningful steps to prevent gun violence and implement common sense policies that will save lives.

I recently read "Finding the Helpers" by Fred Guttenberg, the father of Jaime Guttenberg, a student killed at Margorie Stoneman Douglas High School.

"My daughter was killed while at school by a weapon of war by a teenage boy who was legally able to acquire that weapon. My daughter's murder... changed my life. I hold guilt inside me over never having spoken up before after other shootings, after this happened to other people. If my voice is working now, maybe it could have worked then. ...It is something that now moves me every second of everyday: the an industry

When I returned that night from the vigil, I said to my wife and son, "I am going to break that fucking gun lobby."

## The Elephant in the room

Fred Guttenberg wanted to destroy the group that holds legislators and legislation hostage. "Nobody is trying to take guns away from lawful gun owners; however we can do more to keep those who predictably use guns for violence or to kill from having access to do so. Bills the Democratic caucus has introduced and the Republicans have struck down. ERPO's We will not stop all gun deaths, but we can significantly reduce the gun violence rate. You're dealing with an industry that's kindof like tobacco. The tobacco industry managed to brilliantly control political decisions by throwing around loads of money, so they could continue selling addictive , deadly products until, at last, they were forced to admit in a court of law that they knew the product was killing people, and that it was addictive. We're at the start of the weakening and the downfall of the gun industry, but ultimately, it will require more successful elections, as well as law suits that will cause the gun manufacturers into a court of law. Like the tobacco industry, they need to be made to admit what they knew when they made their decisions."

It was identified that the shooter in the Parkland mass shooting was on a list. The FBI knew about him and his fragile mental state and potential danger that he posed to the community. An Extreme Risk Protection order was passed 2 weeks after the parkland shooting. When disturbing warning signs are identified, as displayed by Nikolas Cruz, the confessed Parkland shooter, licenses can be suspended, a judge can be petitioned to have a person's weapon removed for 14 days, followed by a full hearing, after which a judge can extend the order up to a year.

There are so many other bills....Background checks on all gun Sales, Extreme Risk Protection orders, or Red flag laws, I want someone to be flagged if they are a threat to my community and my children, Safe storage laws,

Attorney General Yost praised our current concealed handgun law by saying

"By any measure, Ohio's concealed carry licensing system has succeeded in combining safeguards that protect the public and provisions that uphold Americans right to bear arms." Safeguards would not be eliminating this system of public safety. Permitless Carry bills are anti-public safety. They seek to repeal important public safety laws that are working in Ohio. Current concealed carry licenses ensure that core public safety standards are preserved when people carry deadly weapons in public places where we all go every day, whether it be the grocery store, places of worship, a restaurant or coffee shop.

Respectfully, it would be supplementing the permit system by thinking about mandatory background checks, extreme risk protection orders or red flag laws, safe storage laws, anything but permitless carry laws like SB215. We are relying on you, our lawmakers, to design policy that will keep Ohioans safe.

Not allow Ohio to look like the Wild Wild West, with vigilantes running through the streets, or worse, concealing a deadly weapon.

SB215, Permitless Carry, revokes Ohio's current concealed carry licensing law and is strongly opposed by law enforcement, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, Fraternal Order of Police, the Ohio Mayor's Alliance, and a broad



coalition of faith leaders, medical professionals, students, Mayors Alliance and the Ohio FOP emailed a letter against SB215 and HB227 to every member of the General Assembly earlier today!

States that have passed Permitless Carry have seen an increase in violence assaults and homicides with guns. I sent statistics substantiating this claim from Everytown to each representative on this committee, that answers Representative White's questions that YES, there is infact a correlation between states that have enacted dangerous gun laws such as Permitless Carry and an increase in homicide and crime rates. In States that passed Permitless Carry, there has been an 11% increase in handgun homicides, and a 13-15% increase in violent crime rates. This is researched by Everytown for Gun Safety. But even The Ohio Capital Journal said on February 18, the day after I testified,

"Public health researchers and anti-gun violence researchers draw links between relaxed gun policies and homicide rates and others. For Instance, researchers with the American Journal for Public Health found states with Permitless Carry laws were associated with an 11% increase in handgun homicide rates. The National Bureau of Economic Researchers found states experienced about a 14% higher rate of violent crime after adopting a new concealed carry permitting system similar to Ohio's current one."

Our state is experiencing a gun violence crisis of epic proportions. Every day, when I wake up I hear about violence with a gun. You do too. SB215 would only exacerbate this problem, making our communities more susceptible to gun violence. Just in Columbus, the homicide rate has reached record levels the

past 2 years with 90% of all homicides committed by gun. We cannot allow the Legislature to put our communities at even greater risk by passing this dangerous Permitless Carry bill.

Third, Permitless Carry Bills are Anti-Victim. I realize that the immunity clause was taken out of SB215. But ask a Mother, a Father, a sister a brother, and Aunt, like the Statehouse employee that I met yesterday, whose 2 nephews were gunned down 7 years ago, whether SB215 favors the shooter over the victim. Because who gets life? I think Permitless carry is Anti Victim. Those victims don't get to attend those criminal proceedings, do they?

Please oppose SB215, as it is anti-public safety, anti police, anti-victim and unconstitutional. Neither the US Constitution, nor the Ohio Constitution protect conceal carry. The Ohio Supreme Court upheld a state forbidding the carrying of concealed weapons and ruled, "there is no constitutional right to bear concealed weapons, in 2003, in the case Klein vs. Leis. Please representatives, be on the side of integrity and compassion, and not the gun lobby. You don't need them. And Trust me, with everything happening, they don't need you.

Thank you for your consideration. We would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Sources:

1. Everytown Research & Policy. (2022). *Gunfire on school grounds in the United States*. <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/gunfire-on-school-grounds/>
2. Moberger, A. (2022, February 9). Crisis in the classroom: teacher's union and CCS staff worry about recent school violence. <https://myfox28columbus.com/news/local/crisis-in-the-classroom-teachers-union-and-ccs-staff-worry-about-recent-school-violence>
3. Orner, B. (2022, February 10). Interactive map: Columbus homicides in 2021, city's deadliest year. <https://www.nbc4i.com/news/local-news/columbus/interactive-map-explore-columbus-homicides-in-2021-citys-deadliest-year/>