



**A MULTI-FAITH
COALITION**

WORKING TO REDUCE
GUN VIOLENCE

through

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

EDUCATION

ADVOCACY

and

**CONVENING
& COLLABORATING**

with

**DIVERSE FAITH
COMMUNITIES &
OTHER PARTNERS**

February 28, 2022

Re: Senate Bill 215

Dear Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brown and Members of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee,

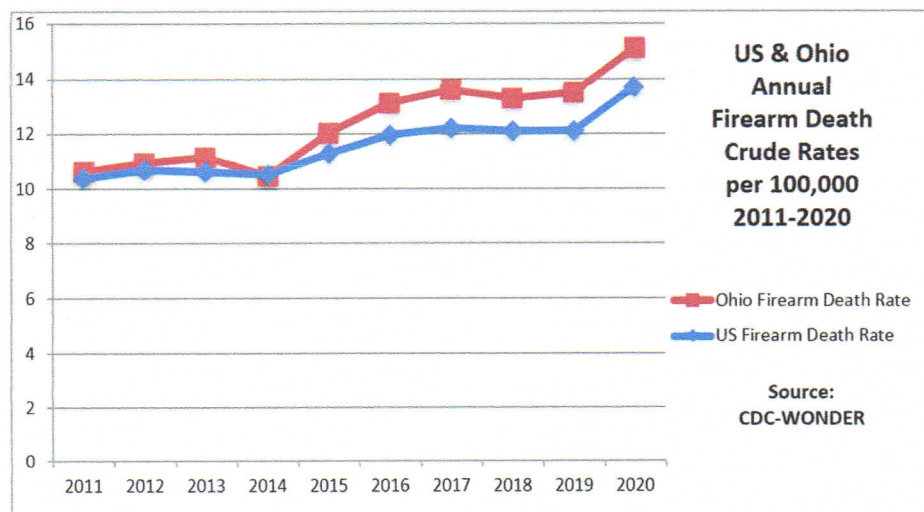
We submit this testimony to urge your opposition to Senate Bill 215.

Ohioans have been told by the gun lobby for years that the secret to reducing gun violence and preserving freedom is to allow more responsible gun owners to carry their concealed guns in more places. How is that working in Ohio?

The latest national gun violence data (2020) was just released by the CDC. Nationally the number of Americans who died by gunshot increased by 14% to more than 45,000 dead in one year. In Ohio the gunshot fatalities increased from 1,578 in 2019 to 1,764 dead Ohioans in 2020, *nearly 5 per day*. And turning specifically to crime, the number of **homicides by gun increased 46% in Ohio in 2020**.

In the 16 years since Ohio passed its “shall issue” concealed carry law, Ohio’s annual gun deaths have increased by 70%. Note that in the same period Ohio’s population increased by only 2%.

Compared to the rest of the nation, Ohio’s gun violence record has gone disastrously wrong. In ten years, Ohio’s rate of death by gunfire surged from *slightly below* the overall US rate to **more than 10% above** the US rate (see <https://www.godbeforeguns.org/ohio-data>).





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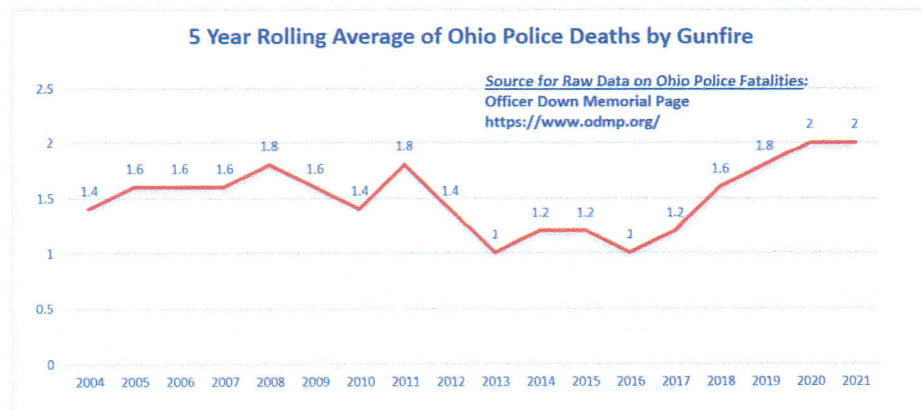
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SB 215 is now before the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee. It is noteworthy that the testimony submitted to this committee in support of **SB 215** does not include any law enforcement organizations. And there is good reason. **SB 215** would remove the requirement of a concealed carry permit Ohio and give up any pretense that a person must have at least a modicum of training and a background check to qualify for a permit and carry a hidden gun in public. But **SB 215** would also reduce the duty of a carrier to notify police officers of a concealed firearm when legally stopped by such officers and would expunge previous convictions of failure to do so. As we increasingly send police into an environment where virtually anyone they encounter may be carrying a firearm, the consequences are too often deadly as shown below:



What does Ohio have to show for 16 years of ever more permissive gun laws in Ohio since the passage of its concealed carry law? There is no denying the steady and very significant increase in gun deaths over that same period for its citizens. And the threat to its police officers is clearly increasing as well. There is no denying the one immediately identifiable coinciding factor: the gun lobby's steady and successful drive to gradually eliminate regulation of firearm ownership and concealed carry.

When confronted with the actual gun violence data, the gun lobby has no credible explanation. So they change the subject. Instead of engaging in analysis of real lives lost and real bodies permanently mutilated by gunshot, they pivot to a discussion of 2nd Amendment rights. Ignoring that 217 years of American history passed before five US Supreme Court justices discerned a Constitutional right to own a gun (*D.C. v. Heller*, 2008), the gun lobby now claims the founding fathers intended that all Americans could not only own firearms but carry them in public places without regulation. But even in *Heller* the Supreme Court majority pointedly noted that gun regulation is not



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unconstitutional. And under the Ohio Constitution our state has a long history of reasonable and constitutional gun regulation.

God Before Guns does not oppose the ownership and responsible use of firearms. But we do oppose the concept that guns are somehow our ultimate source of security. And we place the sanctity of life above a concept of gun “rights” that seems to have no limits. As with all rights, there must be reasonable limits to gun rights and **SB 215** goes too far.

There is absolutely no evidence that expanding concealed carry in Ohio will have any positive effect on gun violence. And it is a twisted idea of “freedom” that encourages more Ohioans to carry hidden guns in public places. Simply put, *more gun violence makes all of us less free*, and there is no denying that gun violence is increasing in Ohio. Sending untrained Ohioans into public places, armed against other Ohioans, invites even more violence.

Allowing virtually any adult to carry a hidden gun in public places is a direct threat to the freedom of other Ohioans to safely access and enjoy those same spaces. **SB 215** is the right place to draw the line on continued deregulation of guns in Ohio. We urge you to do something about gun violence in Ohio by voting in opposition to **SB 215**.

Respectfully,

David Eggert
President, God Before Guns