



**OHIO SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 357
NOVEMBER 29, 2022**

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, Members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Keary McCarthy, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Mayors Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's 30 largest cities. On behalf of the 3.4 million Ohioans that live in our communities, we submit the following testimony in support of Senate Bill 357, and urge you to move this legislation forward as soon as possible.

Local leaders across the state have been working to protect their communities from the very serious threat of gun violence, which has already taken the lives of far too many Ohioans. With few opportunities to implement local measures that will help address the challenges of gun violence, we need stronger state laws to help keep our communities safe. This is why we welcome S.B. 357, which is a strong, cohesive, bipartisan approach to reducing gun crimes and providing needed behavioral health care to our communities.

We support S.B. 357 because it enacts a series of common sense laws that will:

- Help keep guns out of the hands of criminals;
- Prevent threats from high risk individuals from becoming reality; and
- Ensure Ohio's law enforcement officers have the best information possible to keep themselves and their communities safe.

S.B. 357 creates a behavioral risk assessment for certain individuals who have been determined by a court of law to be a risk of danger to themselves or others. We believe that this is a common sense proposal, safeguarded by extensive due process, that will help reduce access to firearms by those who have shown they are an extreme risk to their communities.

The bill also creates a requirement for a co-signer for individuals under the age of 21 who wish to purchase firearms—a policy that does not go as far as some states that have blocked gun sales to individuals under 21. The provision does, however, establish some safeguard to ensure that young adults don't obtain firearms without some oversight from an older adult. This is crucial because the U.S. and Ohio Supreme Courts have determined, based on many years of scientific research, that the human brain doesn't fully develop until the early to mid 20s. We know that gun crime is often perpetrated by juveniles and young adults whose brains have not yet fully developed. This provision will help ensure that young adults' use of firearms is lawful and responsible.

The data entry requirements proposed in S.B. 357 will help our law enforcement agencies identify and share information about people who are legally prohibited from carrying guns. Improving the accuracy and timeliness of state and federal law enforcement databases will both improve background check results and provide officers on the streets with potentially life-saving information. Moreover, enacting this provision will increase Ohio's ability to draw down federal funds from the bipartisan Safer Communities Act to help law enforcement agencies upload and share criminal records and data in the federal background check system. Thus, this provision is critical to protecting our law enforcement officers and keeping guns out of the hands of criminals.

Straw purchasers—individuals who purchase firearms for others who are legally prohibited from doing so—are a significant source of illegal guns on the streets in our communities. S.B. 357 addresses that issue directly by increasing penalties for straw purchases. In the absence of local authority to regulate and restrict such sales, we welcome this provision and its potential to reduce illegal guns in our cities.

The common sense provisions outlined in S.B. 357 are balanced and fair, and will protect Ohioans while preserving the rights of law-abiding gun owners. S.B. 357 will support and improve our different communities' efforts to keep our neighborhoods safe. For all of these reasons, we strongly urge you to vote to advance S.B. 357 as quickly as possible. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this important issue.