

Testimony on Senate HB 51
Ohio House State and Local Government Committee

Submitted by:
Chris Wolf

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB 51 which attempts to establish Ohio as a “sanctuary state” relative to Federal regulation concerning the Second Amendment.

I am a resident of the state of Ohio who is growing increasingly concerned about the impact of gun violence on our state and our country. Gun sales have been robust since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. Not surprisingly, the number of people killed or injured by guns has increased over that same period. These deaths and injuries arose because of suicide, accidents, and other violent acts involving guns. The data (and common-sense) show that more people carrying more guns in more places has a negative impact on our state and our society. In fact, many have characterized the current rate of gun injuries and deaths as an “epidemic”. I would agree with that characterization.

Now that you know my general view of things, allow me to comment on HB 51. I view the proposal of HB 51 as the latest attempt by one of our political parties to avoid the difficult task of discussion, debate, compromise, and agreement in the best interests of the citizens of this state and this country. The proposal is based on the inability to correctly define the root cause of problems and the false premise that the other side is going to do something terrible and has a radical agenda. This divisive approach is dangerous and a legitimate threat to our society, our state, and our country.

I recognize that our state legislature is dominated by Republican Party members who are mostly staunch supporters of the NRA, the Ohio Gun Owners Association, and other similar organizations. Consequently, I understand that this legislation can be rammed through and passed so that those on the Republican side of the aisle feel good about their efforts to “protect the Second Amendment”.

However, I would encourage you to consider a different approach which, I believe, is best for the state of Ohio and its citizens. Take a step back. Force yourselves to be open-minded. Do the work to define the problem you are trying to solve that is backed up by data and other evidence. Then, have conversations with a diverse group of people to gather multiple thoughts, ideas, and suggestions for solving the defined problem. Then, consider whether any new legislation and regulations would be helpful in solving the root cause of the problem you are trying to solve.

Let’s not jump on the “sanctuary state” bandwagon relative to the Second Amendment or for any other reason until and unless there is a real reason to do so. Attempting to establish Ohio

as a “sanctuary state” relative to gun laws is as distasteful to me as attempts by states and cities to establish themselves as “sanctuaries” relative to the enforcement of immigration laws. Please do not move this proposed bill forward in committee. Reconsider this situation as I have previously described and then take steps in the best interest of the State and its citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Wolf