

# OHIO FAMILIES UNITE

## FOR POLITICAL ACTION AND CHANGE

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Emily Cole, I'm a resident of Hilliard Ohio, and I am the Executive Director of Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and Change, or OFUPAC. I am here today in my professional capacity to advocate for our impacted families. The families I stand with have buried loved ones who were killed by gun violence here in Ohio. They have children, fathers, cousins, neighbors, family members, and friends who they will never see again because they tragically lost their lives being on the receiving end of a bullet from a gun. I am here today to stand for our families in strong opposition to House Bill 51.

As I do for all bills we take a position on, I read through House Bill 51 line by line. I'd like to draw your attention to line 385 in the proposed bill, which *removes part of the firearm restrictions in a school safety zone simply because a federal regulation is referenced*. It is chilling the General Assembly claims to encourage responsible firearm ownership, while in the next paragraph considers the following as infringing upon firearm ownership<sup>1</sup>:

- “(1) Any tax, levy, fee, or stamp imposed on firearms, firearm accessories, or ammunition not common to all other goods and services and that might reasonably be expected to create a chilling effect on the purchase or ownership of those items by law-abiding citizens;
- (2) Any registration or tracking of firearms, firearm accessories, or ammunition;
- (3) Any registration or tracking of the owners of firearms, firearm accessories, or ammunition;
- (4) Any act forbidding the possession, ownership, or use or transfer of a firearm, firearm accessory, or ammunition by law-abiding citizens;
- (5) Any act ordering the confiscation of firearms, firearm accessories, or ammunition from law-abiding citizens.”

Further, there is a bizarre “policing for thee but not for me” inclusion starting on line 675:

- “(1) No law enforcement officer shall have the authority to enforce or attempt to enforce any federal acts, laws, executive orders, administrative orders, rules,

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<sup>1</sup> Lines 633- 640: HB 51, Enact the Second Amendment Preservation Act - Loychick, Schmidt, <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/135/hb51>

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regulations, statutes, or ordinances infringing on the right to keep and bear arms as described under this section.”

We remain baffled by the willingness of some members of this body to allow for civil rights to redress over *firearms* but not when the police *brutalize actual Ohioans*. Are you all honestly willing to waive civil immunity for firearms but not for the person holding it? So many of our families were not able to pursue a civil case against the officer who killed their child because of qualified immunity, and yet this bill waives sovereign immunity if an officer violates a person’s “right to bear arms”.

I am running out of words to describe how infuriating it is that members of this legislative body hold the rights of firearms in higher esteem than the rights of the people of Ohio. Need I remind you that Ohio is a traditional open-carry state. We now allow open-carry of firearms without registration and without tracking, with or without a license, as well as permitless concealed carry. After the last General Assembly I honestly thought we could not encourage more gun violence if we tried, yet here we are.

We believe this makes our communities less safe, which should be a goal for all of us. Current events tell us that the police are more likely to fire into crowds of civilians if a shooting is occurring or has happened. In Dayton during the Oregon District mass shooting, police killed some of the people who died during that event and wounded others as they discharged their weapons during the shooting. In the Short North several weeks ago, police shot wildly into the street, also wounding pedestrians in the wrong place at the wrong time because they were responding to gun violence in the streets.

You place us all in danger every time you hold the barrel of the gun in higher consideration than the person it is aimed towards. House Bill 51 is appallingly reckless and inhumane.

I urge you to vote no on House Bill 51. Please, put the families of Ohio above the firearms of Ohio.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Emily Cole

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