



State Representative
Cecil Thomas
Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 170
Government Oversight Committee
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Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for HB 170, the Enact Extreme Risk Protection Order Act. Now that Representative Grim has explained the mechanics of the HB 170, I will take a moment to discuss gun violence generally and how an ERPO bill would help address it.

Gun violence comes in the form of mass shootings, incidents of domestic conflict, and suicides. We are all familiar with the mass killings involving firearms that occur in this country almost weekly. A shooter takes a firearm to a public location and begins indiscriminately firing. While communities reel in the wake of these killings, the shooter's behavior often does not come as a complete surprise to some who knew him or her. In fact, a study conducted by the FBI found that active shooters displayed roughly four to five pre-attack behaviors that suggest violent intentions.¹ Importantly, this signaling behavior is not unique to mass shooters. Domestic abusers, too, provide warning signs as their threats graduate to violence.

This is where HB 170 comes in. HB 170 ensures that those in a position to see the warning signs have a mechanism in place that allows them to proactively intervene. Specifically, this bill establishes a legal process for the temporary suspension of firearms from those who are perceived to be a threat to others. Temporarily suspending an at-risk individual's access to firearms allows for a period of tension de-escalation that hopefully prevents tragedy.

¹ <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/pre-attack-behaviors-of-active-shooters-in-us-2000-2013.pdf/view>

So far I've discussed individuals who have intent to harm others. But let me briefly reorient the conversation around at-risk persons who pose a danger to themselves. While mass shootings get most of the media attention, gun suicides actually account for over half of the firearm deaths in Ohio and the country.² That statistic is particularly distressing because suicide is preventable. Suicide attempts are often impulsive acts precipitated by transient life crises. Unfortunately, when a firearm is used, over eight and ten attempts result in death.³ HB 170 would impede easy access to this most lethal method of suicide.

Just last week we observed National Gun Violence Awareness Day. The purpose was to honor the lives of gun violence victims and survivors. While awareness days serve to highlight crucial issues facing Ohioans, it is important we representatives follow them up with concrete legislation that addresses the problems advocates have called attention to. Ohioans have asked us repeatedly to do something. HB 170 is our opportunity to listen.

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the chance to testify today in support of HB 170. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

² <https://harvardpublichealth.org/health-policy-management/new-gun-deaths-data-in-u-s-show-continued-rise-in-suicides/>

³ https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/guns-suicide/