

Testimony on House Bill 33
Senate Health Committee

May 9, 2023

Submitted by:
Veronica Howard

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the health committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of funding organizations in Ohio that work to prevent gun violence. My name is Veronica Howard, and I am testifying as a citizen and a survivor of gun violence along with being a volunteer with Together We Rise Coalition in Cleveland, Ohio.

I am JayJay's Mom. He was murdered on Dec 24th 2011.

If I may take you back to March of 2020, that's the month and year we saw the COVID Pandemic destroy lives. There were stories of Sons and Fathers, Mothers and daughters, Sisters and brothers, young and Old, black , brown and Yes White people dying daily across the nation and the world because of the COVID 19 Pandemic

Our powers that be realized that if something wasn't done and quickly, whole families would be destroyed. So they went to action providing tools, ventilators and resources. Spent money, made money, found money to provide for families in this time of Crisis!

That was three years ago! It's been twelve years since the pandemic of gun violence has come through my family and continues to destroy. You see, my youngest son was 17 at the time his brother was murdered and now at 30, he's still struggling. He's angry, sad and has no hope! I Lost 2 Sons that day! I see my other son slowly dying. His denial of the unimaginable, the distress of the disease of gun violence is slowly killing my other son.

Local communities across Ohio are currently suffering from the tragic effects of increased gun violence. Guns are the leading cause of death among children and teens in Ohio. In an average year, 65% of gun deaths in this age group are homicides (everytown.org). Gun violence must be recognized as a pandemic. Families continue to be destroyed daily! Immediate relief is needed NOW! Send the ventilators for this PANDEMIC

I ask that you please do your part to diminish gun violence by supporting funding for prevention efforts. Community violence intervention and prevention programs can help reduce gun violence in Ohio's hardest hit communities. Prioritizing community violence intervention programs in the state budget would provide an essential source of funding and support for this life-saving work

Sincerely
JAYJAY'S Mom
Veronica Howard