



Mr. Chairman, members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am Rob Sexton, Legislative Affairs Director for Buckeye Firearms Association. BFA is Ohio's premier defender of the Second Amendment. We remain strong proponents of House Bill 5 because it continues to address our top priority for this General Assembly.

House Bill 5 strikes a great balance. Many members of the legislature have spoken openly about the need to crack down on repeat offenders. Ohio's mayors have repeatedly commented that a disproportionate number of violent crimes are committed by a very small subset of criminals. House Bill 5 addresses this problem.

But at the same time, it also addresses a significant problem with the loss of constitutional rights for low level offenders. House Bill 5 clarifies the process for sealing and expungement for low level offenders, making it easier to navigate for those who have paid their debt to society. It solves the issue for those who no longer live in Ohio.

The amended bill creates timelines and a tiered system allowing the judiciary to see if an applicant's rehabilitation is legitimate. The amendment removes automatic sealing from the introduced version that we strongly preferred and instead provides some judicial discretion if the interest of the government substantially outweighs the interests of the applicant.

The framers of our Constitutions did not envision a lifetime of lost Constitutional protections for low level offenses. But that is what takes place in Ohio. For three General Assemblies,

legislators have discussed how best to strike an adequate balance between getting tougher on repeat offenders and allowing for restoration for those who committed low level offenses.

Buckeye Firearms Association is a proponent of this bill because of the restoration provisions. Current law leaves people who are fully rehabilitated defenseless in their own homes, if they are to remain law abiding. That's a choice our laws should not force. Without the sealing, expungement, and restoration provisions, BFA cannot support this legislation, and instead would likely oppose it.

House Bill 5 achieves both the priorities of law enforcement and the natural law rights of self-defense. We've given ground on what in our view should be a "shall restore" bill to one with some judicial discretion. If the problem with violent crime is overwhelmingly due to repeat offenders, HB 5 is the solution.

We ask this committee to consider the balance struck in this bill to address both issues and vote favorably to send House Bill 5 to the full House for consideration.