Catherine D. Ingram
State Senator
9th Senate District

Committees:
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Sponsor Testimony - Senate Bill 237

Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 237, To Restore local authority to regulate firearms-related conduct. This legislation is a reintroduction of Senate Bill 78 from the last General Assembly and would return home rule to local governments to fight gun violence.

In 2006, the 126th General Assembly passed House Bill 347, commonly known as Ohio's firearm preemption law. The law prohibits political subdivisions, including cities and counties, from regulating firearms, firearm components, ammunition, and knives.

Since its enactment, it has limited local governments across Ohio for nearly 20 years, preventing them from adopting commonsense firearm safety measures tailored to their communities and addressing gun violence and public safety concerns.

The city of Cincinnati has invested millions of dollars in public safety initiatives, violence prevention efforts, youth engagement programs, and community-based strategies to reduce gun violence and make neighborhoods safer. Local leaders have recognized that addressing public safety requires both prevention and intervention, and they have committed significant resources toward that goal.

At the same time, the city sought to enact a safe storage ordinance designed to reduce accidental shootings, prevent firearm thefts, and keep guns out of the hands of children. Yet that effort was ultimately overturned because of Ohio's preemption law.

This raises a simple question: if local governments are willing to invest resources and respond to the needs of their communities, why are we preventing them from considering additional tools that could save lives?

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Our local governments are not asking to infringe upon constitutional rights. They are asking for the flexibility to address the unique public safety challenges facing their communities. As a state, we should be supporting those efforts, not limiting them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 237. We welcome any questions at this time.

Ohio Senate| 1 Capitol Square Columbus, OH 43215 | (614) 466-5980 | Ingram@ohiosenate.gov