

Hearcel F. Craig
Assistant Minority Leader
Senate District 15



Casey Weinstein
State Senator
Senate District 28

Sponsor Testimony for Senate Bill 98 of the 136th General Assembly
Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
October 22nd, 2025

Senator Craig:

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the **Senate Judiciary Committee**, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on **Senate Bill 98**, legislation to prohibit firearm possession for certain domestic violence offenses. I am proud to co-sponsor this bill with Senator Weinstein.

Domestic violence remains one of the most devastating issues facing Ohio families. A single act of violence can upend an entire household, leaving lasting trauma for survivors and their children. Sadly, the problem is growing. **The Columbus Dispatch** recently reported a **38% increase** in people killed in intimate partner domestic violence cases over the past year, the highest number in a decade.

According to the **Ohio Domestic Violence Network**, **157 Ohioans** were killed in the last year, **84%** of them by firearms. **36 children** witnessed these killings, and **92 children** lost one or both parents. In nearly every murder-suicide case, a gun was involved. These numbers make one thing clear: **firearms dramatically escalate the lethality of domestic violence situations.**

This violence not only affects families but also endangers the very people who respond to protect them. Domestic violence calls are among the most volatile and dangerous situations for law enforcement officers. We tragically saw this reality when **Morrow County Sheriff's Deputy**

Daniel Sherrer, just 31 years old, was fatally shot on a domestic violence call earlier this year.

Senate Bill 98 amends sections **2923.13** and **2923.14** of the Ohio Revised Code to prohibit individuals charged with or convicted of first-degree misdemeanor domestic violence from possessing a firearm or dangerous ordnance. After extensive review, Senator Weinstein and I believe this bill will be more effective and constitutionally sound if it applies **only to individuals who have been convicted**, rather than those merely charged.

This change strikes the right balance between **public safety and due process**. It ensures that we are not imposing firearm restrictions before a court has rendered a guilty verdict, upholding constitutional principles while keeping weapons out of the hands of proven domestic violence offenders.

Senate Bill 98 is a commonsense measure to save lives, protect families, and support the officers who serve our communities. We look forward to working with this committee to move it forward.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Senator Weinstein:

Thank you, Senator Craig, and thank you again to Chair Manning and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 98.

Senate Bill 98 would make it a third-degree felony for an individual convicted of first-degree misdemeanor domestic violence to possess a firearm or dangerous ordnance. As Senator Craig mentioned, we're working on an amendment to clarify that the bill would apply only after a conviction.

This legislation comes at a critical time. Fatalities from domestic violence involving firearms are increasing across Ohio. Between July 2024 and June 2025, there were 157 deaths resulting from 108 intimate partner violence cases. This is the highest number recorded in the past decade. In comparison, the previous three years each saw between 112 and 114 fatalities. This most recent total marks an increase of 25 more deaths than any other year in the last ten years.

Firearms were involved in the overwhelming majority of these cases. Of the 157 fatalities, 84 percent involved a firearm, compared to 70 percent the previous year. Among those killed were 11 children, law enforcement officers responding to domestic violence calls, and victims ranging in age from four months to 89 years old. These tragedies occurred in 36 counties across the state, and the trend is only worsening. The link between domestic violence and firearms is well documented and deeply concerning. A person experiencing domestic violence is five times more likely to be killed if their abuser has access to a firearm. Nationally, someone is shot and killed by a current or former intimate partner every 12 hours.

We recognize that most gun owners in Ohio are responsible individuals who use firearms safely for hunting, sport, or personal protection. Senate Bill 98 is not intended to interfere with those lawful uses. Rather, it's focused on ensuring that individuals who have already been convicted of violent acts against those closest to them do not have access to firearms.

We've heard from survivors, advocates, and service providers across Ohio who are calling on us to strengthen protections for victims. While federal law already prohibits most individuals convicted of domestic violence from possessing firearms, this bill aligns Ohio's law with that federal standard. If enacted, Ohio would join 32 other states that have already adopted similar policies.

Senate Bill 98 is a focused, commonsense effort to reduce harm and save lives. It does not affect responsible, lawful gun ownership. It provides a critical safeguard for individuals at serious risk from those with a known history of violence.

We appreciate the committee's consideration and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

