OHIO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
Partnering for Stronger Cities and Villages

OHIO SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

February 10, 2026

Written Opponent Testimony
Senate Bill 278

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Ohio House Senate Local Government Committee:

My name is Kent Scarrett, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Ohio Municipal League. On behalf of the more than 730 cities and villages we represent, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill 278.

Ohio municipalities have a strong and well established record of following state and federal law, including the U.S. Constitution and the Ohio Constitution. When conflicts arise, existing law already provides clear remedies, including declaratory and injunctive relief and compensatory damages. Courts are well equipped to address violations without the need to expand liability to punitive or exemplary damages against municipalities.

This bill would unnecessarily expose cities and villages – and ultimately local taxpayers – to increased financial risk, even when municipalities are acting in good faith to carry out their responsibilities. The threat of punitive damages could discourage local officials from making routine decisions and enforcing laws intended to protect public safety and welfare.

OML's opposition to this bill is not about guns or gun control policy, itself. Rather, our concern is about preserving the ability of municipalities to effectively perform their roles on behalf of the residents they serve, without facing heightened and punitive financial exposure for actions already governed by extensive constitutional and statutory safeguards.

For these reasons, we believe this legislation to be unnecessary and respectfully urge the committee to oppose Senate Bill 278.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.