

Testimony on House Bill 248
Federalism Committee

Submitted by:
Carolina Lopez-Ruiz

Chair Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB 248.

To the Chairman, to the Committee.

My name is Carolina López-Ruiz, and I speak as a citizen, a mother of school and college age children, a wife, and a university professor at OSU, where I have taught for 15 years.

Thank you for allowing me to express my stern opposition to HB 248.

This bill is in all effect a package of ad-hoc “stand your ground” modifications to the current laws. Current gun laws in Ohio have already made our state less safe; plagued with gun violence, with an increase of 54% in gun-deaths between 2009 and 2018 (compared to 18% nationwide, a number in itself appalling). Even after the mass shooting in our very own Dayton OH, the legislators were incapable to agree on basic gun-sense legislation and “do something” as the Governor promised he would. But it is not the horrible if rare mass-shooting we need to react to, because it is a tragedy of the size that makes national headlines. It is the daily use of firearms in our streets and homes, in bars, in student resident areas (may I remind you of the OSU student who got shot at a party last month). Also the high rate of domestic abuse and intimidation, and of impulsive suicides among those with guns at home. But for HB 248 proponents, it is never enough. They want this gun-plague now to come to schools.

Let me speak about this point, as it touches me more personally: HB 248 would allow (may I say encourage) people to carry a deadly weapon in a school safety zone and reduce penalties for concealed carry violations in areas the schools have given the liberty to keep as school safety zones. We know that guns and schools do not mix well together. This relaxation of the current law would certainly lead to more violence in and around schools:

<https://everytownresearch.org/issue/guns-in-schools#what-is-the-problem>).

As for universities, HB 248 would take away the liberty public universities were given to

choose to keep guns out of their campuses. The bill will prohibit them from effectively restricting concealed carry among students, from taking any sort of action if they violate the university's own rules. Not only is there no evidence that guns on campuses reduce crime or make campuses safer

(<https://everytownresearch.org/solution/guns-on-campus/>), but more profoundly wrong is the fact that both provisions (for schools and universities) attacks the freedom of educational institutions to manage their space and keep it free of intimidation, fear, and violence. I am sure I am not the only one who has nightmares about class shootings already. And I am much more afraid of the self-proclaimed vigilantes who would be coming to class armed every day, than of the presumed terrorist attack they think they are there to prevent. I feel better if the police and other agencies, as well as our mental health workers work on trying to prevent those. I do not want weapons on our classrooms: On top of that, another law in the works defends that the minimum age to carry/own a weapon should be reduced from 21 to 17, hence making all college students potential gun-carriers. These changes would make us teachers afraid of and subject to our own students' capacity to kill. It is as basic as that.

Gun lobbyists often claim that "the second amendment" protects the first amendment, that fundamental right of freedom of speech, on which our democracy is built. I can tell you as a an educator that the mere thought of having armed students in my classroom absolutely violates my freedom of speech. But for the guns-everywhere and stand-your-ground defenders, the law should always be on the side of the gun owner, especially if he is a white male gun owner. If you support these bills, which circumvent the right this same legislating body gave us to keep our learning spaces free of intimidation, you are accomplices in a major attack on our basic freedom. "Liberty" is not an absolute thing: otherwise we would not have laws and constitutional amendments to adjust to changing circumstances. It is up to you to decide how far you want to take one right to limit another, more fundamental one: the right to speak, and teach, in peace.

Carolina Lopez-Ruiz

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: November 17, 2020

Name: Carolina Lopez-Ruiz

Are you representing: Yourself Organization _____

Organization (If Applicable):

Position/Title:

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 248

Specific Issue:

Are you testifying as a: Proponent _____ Opponent Interested Party _____

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require?

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

I oppose House Bill 248.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.