

Jill Galvan
HB 227 Testimony
October 13, 2021

Dear Chairman Wilkins, Vice Chair White, and Ranking Member Sweeney: I appreciate your hearing my testimony today. I've been a resident of Columbus for sixteen years. I'm a faculty member at Ohio State, speaking as a private citizen, to oppose HB 227.

When I have attended Ohio legislative hearings on bills like HB 227, powerful opponent views have resonated with me immediately, as a parent. I have seen high school students describe the lockdowns that have been routine in their schooling since grade school. Sometimes gun violence is talked about as a natural phenomenon—something that just can't be helped. But in fact, nothing about gun violence is natural or inevitable. It is the effect of real policies that we can choose to enact, or not. As I'm sure you'll hear others testify, statistically speaking, violence increases when states pass laws that eliminate the necessity for permits. Making kids go through a routine drill to prepare them for mass violence is a recent cultural development. We did not have lockdowns when you and I were young; they have grown with the rise of gun violence over time.

In the case of my own two kids, I have to admit that the only way I've learned to accept these conditions is to compartmentalize. How could I possibly send my sons to school every day if I were thinking regularly about the possibility of them being killed in a mass shooting, or "injured" (a simple word that hides so much about lasting, damaging effects to people's lives)? Or if I thought about how much even survivors of school mass shootings are traumatized by what they've seen? Since the 2018 Parkland shooting, two kids from that school have committed suicide. At least one is clearly documented to have had survivor's guilt. Perhaps the other did as well.

In listening to testimony opposing such bills, I also learned a lot from gun owners, law enforcement officers, and those with military training. Repeatedly, these witnesses conveyed that eliminating the need for a permit, along with training, would make situations unnecessarily volatile and dangerous. The whole purpose of a gun, as they've pointed out, is to kill. Training teaches people to respect guns. It enables them to take precautions and keep themselves and others safe. Eliminating both permits and training eliminates that respect for a lethal weapon's capacities.

I'd like also to offer my own perspective on this issue as someone who teaches on a college campus, another school setting where mass violence has too often occurred. I love my job, but students are very easily on edge, and I've had been on the bad end of their stress before. I've had a student yell obscenities at me; in another case, a student's temper made me scared enough that I made sure I wasn't alone with him when I had to tell him he'd received a bad grade. The reality of my job is that I work with masses of people I hardly know. I'm generally trusting, but I'm also always aware that these are young people facing sometimes enormous challenges and a new independence that can be difficult for them to handle. The idea that someone could arm themselves, carry it concealed in a public place, and then act on a frustration against me, or a student or a colleague, is another thing I've learned to compartmentalize from day to day.

Because the more we relax the conditions for owning and using guns, the more my very ordinary teaching becomes a work hazard.

A question sometimes comes up in these discussions about “ill-intent.” It goes like this: “If someone has ill intent, how can you possibly stop them from carrying it out? Having or not having a law won’t stop it.” Like “good guy” or “bad guy,” these words, “ill-intent,” paint a false, starkly polarized view of how violence occurs. Violent actions can of course be premeditated, as in the case of the hypothetical, well-planned shooting at one of my sons’ schools. But often, violence is not a question of a well-crafted, sinister plan or an act by a hopelessly “evil” human being. It’s a matter of people snapping in the moment because they’re angry, overwhelmed, or scared. This again raises the issue of training. When you reduce training for anything, you reduce someone’s level of confidence and thoughtfulness in that moment when a situation gets tough or stressful. You make it more likely they’ll leap to rash actions. That’s why we’re putting police officers more in harm’s way when we put guns in the hands of people who don’t know how to use them. These people have a greater chance of freaking out in the moment, even in a basic traffic stop. And on the other hand, giving gun owners a protocol to follow helps them to remain calm. That measure of preparation can make the difference between a safe situation and a tragedy.

Will we ever stop violence altogether? Of course not. But it’s a matter of degree. How *much* violence do we, as a culture, want to enable? This is also a case of risk and odds. The odds of gun violence are more in our control than proponents allow. Eliminating common-sense safeguards raises certain odds: it makes it *more likely* that senseless violence will occur.

Lastly, I want to speak in practical terms about keeping the state of Ohio strong, productive, and attractive, economically. If Ohio were to become a permitless carry state, many in my own profession would certainly think twice about coming here for a job. Additionally, once a person is hired at OSU, it can sometimes be hard to keep them here: faculty are constantly wooed away by job offers from other states. There are also OSU students to consider. As of [last count](#) (last Fall 2020), Ohio State’s out-of-state student population made up 27% of the student body. That’s a sizable amount. I can well imagine that many young people (or their parents) would think twice about coming to OSU or some other Ohio school if they considered the state unsafe.

Losing students is especially a risk in the case of graduate students. We often have to court graduate students to come here, because they’re very sought-after by other schools. I sat on a fellowship committee last year for fields across campus, and in every field, there were brilliant, hardworking, already well accomplished applicants; we were trying to figure out the best way to make them choose us. What happens when a graduate or undergraduate student chooses *not* to come to Ohio? Not only do we lose them for the time being, but we lose the opportunity to build up Ohio’s citizenry, because many students stay here after they graduate.

Passing HB 227 will give people in many professions and industries substantial reason to hesitate to choose Ohio. They’ll ask themselves: is this the kind of place where I want to make a life and raise a family? Would I be safe? Would my kids be safe? I urge you, for these and other reasons, to oppose HB 227. Thank you for your time.