

Opposition Testimony on House Bill 227

Government Oversight Committee

October 13, 2021

Submitted by Tiffany Murray

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the committee: Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Tiffany Murray. I am a resident of Ohio in the Linden area of Columbus. I am an ordained minister who has worked with people living with mental illnesses and families and individuals impacted by gun violence professionally. During my volunteer work in the communities where I have lived and as a former Program Manager of an anti-gun violence program, safety is always an important issue for me. HB 227 would expand the ability to carry concealed deadly weapons to certain criminals and people charged with crimes who cannot currently obtain a gun license. Ohioans have heard legislators tell us time and again that gun safety laws only penalize law-abiding citizens. If this is the case, then there is no reason to change who may obtain a CCW license. We need laws that will encourage responsible gun ownership, not find loopholes so people can conceal deadly weapons (i.e. machetes, pipes, 2x4's, tactical knives, etc) and possibly get prior convictions or evidence expunged from their records. Widening the net of who can carry concealed weapons, when violence is increasing in our state, is not a way to keep our communities safe. Instead, it increases the chances that gun and deadly weapon violence will occur. Why would someone need to carry concealed anything that could harm others without being checked to see if that person is going to be safe with said guns or weapons? For whom are these laws intended for and for what purpose would they serve? This is not the wild west and we are constantly evolving into people who seek peaceful ways to address grievances. We do not need to be a state that allows lawlessness to rule with individuals who do not have the ability to go through the necessary processes that allow us to keep guns and deadly weapons out of the hands of those who are at risk to greater society. I come from a long line of people who hunted and used guns or knives for personal protection. Guns had a purpose and a place. They were not to be taken lightly. It was always explained that those who had a gun needed to know how to properly handle it and when it is ethically appropriate to use a weapon with the power to inflict great harm or death. I believe that anyone who has possession of something that can cause harm or death and will be out in public, should be trained and licensed in how to properly use it. We expect security guards and police officers to be trained in how and when to use a gun, but we, in the state of Ohio, are considering putting right and wrong in the hands of people we hope will make wise choices. Making a decision that can be so life-threatening such as possession of a gun or a deadly weapon, needs to be known and the person needs to be proven fit to use that gun or weapon. We are in a time in American history where our citizens are not safe at schools and universities, theaters, churches, malls, night clubs, or many of the places we once saw as sanctuaries and

places of enjoyment, but the increase in gun violence by people not fit to use a gun has altered what safety means in public spaces. I have found myself looking at strangers as possible aggressors because I do not know if there is someone who I may have a disagreement with who decides I am a perceived threat that needs to be dealt with via a gun or a deadly weapon. I also believe this bill is hostile to law enforcement and harmful to the public's safety in the following ways: 1. It would dangerously eliminate the current responsibility of civilians carrying a concealed weapon to promptly notify police when stopped if they are carrying a concealed weapon. 2. By eliminating any requirement for a concealed deadly weapons license, this bill would make it impossible for police to determine if a person with a concealed gun was legally carrying it and could result in police unknowingly letting people illegally carrying concealed guns or deadly weapons continue to carry them. 3. It would prohibit police from considering whether a person was carrying a concealed gun or deadly weapon in determining whether the police should question or temporarily detain that individual and thereby shackle the police in keeping Ohioans safe. Esteemed Chairperson and Committee members, I speak not as a person against guns or specialized weapons for the purpose of not intentionally harming citizens, but rather as one who believes strongly in gun and deadly weapon safety and has been traumatized when they are not. I have lost childhood friends to gun violence; knew people who have scars or bodily deformities because someone in anger thought a deadly weapon was the way to deal with the issue; had to pass a memorial in front of the connected building I lived in; barely missed being stuck in the middle of a murder-suicide in college; have a friend whose cousin was on the news months ago because an unknown assailant shot her car while driving on 315; I have avoided places because I had concerns about incidents like the Polaris shooting and many of the public shootings that have taken place across this country. I almost must walk out of my door with the assumption or presumption that a conflict or being at the mercy of someone with a gun could happen at any time in any place. Without controls in place to prevent irresponsible gun usage, it creates an atmosphere of distrust, anxiety, uncertainty, and fear for those that we charge to uphold the law and citizens alike. I do not want to be the next victim of somebody's malice then later in people's thoughts and prayers. I want to know if there is someone in my presence that has been granted the right to carry a gun or weapon, they have been trained on proper usage and appropriate decision-making. Violence is pervasive and many of us are fighting every day to be voices and agents of gun safety in our communities, yet sometimes there are well intentioned laws that lead to unintended tragedies impacting communities forever. For this reason, I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this dangerous bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.