

Columbus, October 13, 2021

To the Chairman of the Government Oversight Committee, Mr. Shane Wilkin,

Thank you for letting me present this testimony. My name is Carolina López-Ruiz, and I speak as a wife and mother, a university educator, and a concerned Ohio and US citizen.

We have recently heard the testimony of those defending this dangerous legislation. I won't comment on the alarming rates of gun violence in our state and our country, which is entangled with other systemic issues like racism, inequality, domestic violence, psychological despair and the lack of adequate healthcare coverage, etc. Others have or will do that. Instead, I want to respond to take the bull by the horns and address the argument about fundamental "rights and freedoms."

The current law does not limit anyone's freedom to carry weapons, while deregulating conceal-carry does not make me or anyone, I think, feel any safer or more free. HB 227 will encourage illegal owners as well as untrained people to carry concealed guns. Gun owners themselves, including those giving proponent testimony, emphasized that training is essential. Are we supposed to just trust that ALL gun owners will follow such training on their own initiative? Of course not. The same way I cannot trust that every driver around me in the highway will drive responsibly. But I can at least know that as a society, we are responsible enough to require a minimum threshold of knowledge, ability, and practice to be on the road, or to handle any equipment that puts others in danger for that matter.

But there is a deeper problem in the logic of their argument: One argument that surfaces time and again by some proponents is that Ohioans need to have unrestricted access to guns to defend themselves from a possible government attack and tyranny. Our Commonwealth peers in Australia and New Zealand, and now Canada, who passed common sense-gun regulations on the immediate wake of mass shootings, apparently should have fallen into dictatorial regimes, but they haven't.— We are dealing with extreme and completely ahistorical ideas. You should be *offended* at the suggestion that you intend to conspire against Ohio's population. I assume that you are NOT. In that case, reason tells us that unrestricted access to guns is more dangerous to Ohioans than their own government. But, of course, we all know this is not the real fear. Their position is based on a deeper sense that in their complete and unrestrained freedom from regulation lies some kind of power over others, specially marginal groups, and women. Hence back to the racism, sexism, and other endemic issues our nation faces.

We also all know that the "permit-less carry" bill is not about lawful gun owners' right to just "put on a jacket" while open carrying their guns. That argument is ridiculously disingenuous. In fact, most people do not carry their firearms in the open, or they carry them unloaded when they do, and there are reasons for that. On the other hand, as supporters of the bill and members of the committee acknowledged, the constitution does allow for the regulation of the right to bear arms—as confirmed by Justice Scalia in the Heller decision— just as it allows regulations for any other rights. As some have said in other iterations of these hearings, we can consider freedom of movement a constitutional (indeed a human) right. Why do we have to be bothered

every time we travel, not only by producing documents, but having our bodies and our belongings scrutinized and screened. We might even have our water confiscated if we mistakenly leave it in our bag. Is the right to be hydrated not an essential right, too? And yet, every time I travel, I comply with the safety regulations. We all comply, because that's what it takes to be part of a community. We should be able to keep our basic freedoms and still to be bothered with some regulations when appropriate, even if we believe they are not necessary for us individually. We owe it to each other. Your rights end where mine begin.

*Thank you for listening (or reading)*