

Rev Joan VanBecelaere
March 9, 2022

Chair Wilkin, ViceChair White, Ranking Member Brown and other members of the Government Oversight Committee;

I am the Rev Joan VanBecelaere, a retired community minister affiliated with North Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lewis Center, OH. And I write in Opposition to SB 185.

I understand that in the event that police need to cordon off an area when trying to stop a riot or mob or even a peaceful protest that does not have a permit, SB 185 would still allow firearms and explosives and other dangerous weapons to be brought into or surrounding the cordoned off area. Don't we face enough gun violence now? Why must we also invite an occasion for violence to escalate with unrestricted firearms and explosives?

Example of what this means: A group does a peaceful rally or protest outside the Statehouse that is done without a permit or includes civil disobedience. The protestors are cordoned off by law enforcement officials. There would be nothing to prevent people opposed to the protestors to surround the cordoned off protestors with guns and dynamite. Furthermore, if there were agent provocateurs in the cordoned off area, it would be legal for others outside the cordoned off area to hand over guns or dynamite over to them.

And an eExample of how this proliferation of firearms will chill peaceful and lawful public witness: : Any group holding any kind of peaceful protest or march could be subject to being surrounded or intimidated by people there with guns, explosives, or other deadly weapons. If the police or other governmental official seek to take those guns etc. from the individuals for the sake of safety, those officials could be legally sued for damages and other forms of relief. If there is anything that resembles violence or over-reaction by the protestors against those with the weapons and those with weapons choose to use them, they would almost certainly claim a "stand your ground defense."

Please retain the original wording of the Ohio law that would prohibit the sale, dispensing or possessing of firearms, other dangerous weapons, explosives in, to or from the cordoned off area.

Thank you for understanding my opposition and please amend this bill.