

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Kelly, and distinguished members of the House State and Local Government Committee:

My name is Josiah Lanning. I stand before you here today as a lifelong resident of the State of Ohio and a strong proponent of House Bill 62. In order to adequately understand from my perspective as to why HB 62 is a vital piece of legislation, let me provide the context which I have utilized to determine my support.

As an infant, I was diagnosed with a disability which I have lived with my entire life. This has created a unique set of challenges for my physical, social, and intellectual development over the years but has *never defined me*. In 2019, I graduated from the John Glenn College of Public Affairs with a Master degree in Public Administration. Given my background in public policy and politics, I have had a keen interest in relevant policy discussions. In recent weeks, due to the perceived uptick in gun violence, progressives on both sides of the political aisle have once again returned to their familiar incantation for “common sense gun control.” While there are many partisan perspectives surrounding the Second Amendment and gun control, my hope would be to provide this committee with an alternative perspective on the importance of the Second Amendment to both citizens and individuals with disabilities alike.

### **History**

On December 15, 1791, the United States of America adopted the first 10 amendments to the United States Constitution, commonly referred to as the Bill of Rights. These amendments both recognized the natural rights of individual citizens and emphatically prohibited the newly created centralized government from infringing on those rights. Arguably the most contentiously debated of these amendments are the 27 words of Second Amendment which guarantee the right of the people to keep and bear arms. The literal interpretation of this text was etched into legal precedent in *DC v. Heller* where the Supreme Court held that the Second Amendment “protects an individual right to possess a firearm unconnected with service in a militia, and to use that arm for traditionally lawful purposes.”<sup>i</sup> In addition, Ohio’s Constitution definitively outlines specific protection for the right of the people to bear arms for the purpose of their defense and security.<sup>ii</sup> Despite these unique legal protections of the right to keep and bear arms, both here in Columbus and in Washington, DC, progressives have continued their seemingly never-ending assault on the Second Amendment.

### **Current State of Affairs**

On April 7, 2021, utilizing the unique policy window created by the murder sprees in Bolder and Atlanta, America’s newest chief executive announced a series of pending executive actions designed to address gun violence. Within the next 60 days, regulatory action regarding “ghost guns,” pistols with a stabilizing brace, and red flag laws will be prescribed to address America’s newest “public health epidemic.”<sup>iii</sup> It is not farfetched, however, to expect that a desired legislative cornerstone of Biden gun reform would be to institute a stronger version of the Clinton assault weapons ban.

As someone with a background in public policy and strategic communications, it is particularly alarming to me that the current administration referred to gun violence as a “public health epidemic.” Overshadowed by continued massive government overreach disguised as “public

health” and COVID response, Ohioans have suffered through egregious violations of individual rights. Both the federal and state government have been permitted to deem individual and businesses essential or non-essential. Public health administrators have been allowed to issue mask mandates which have served as the return state sanctioned discrimination and have strong-armed private businesses to be their social enforcement mechanism. Many states including Ohio have been on the brink of economic collapse, relying on federal bailouts to keep them financially solvent. ***For the political elite as well as health administrators, the COVID public health emergency and its associated fear campaign have served as the perfect vehicle to seize previously unfathomable amounts of political power with little to no resistance.***

For nearly a year, Ohioans have largely been told to sit down, shut up, and do what we say (trust the experts and follow the science). Many have complied with no questions asked and have relentlessly harassed the non-compliant. For those of us who have dared to use critical thinking skills, we have been name-called, mocked, demonized, deleted, and canceled. Terms like asymptomatic, infected, and exposed have been used as blanket excuses for denial or access and/or service. ***The sole cause of the mistreatment and abuse of who should otherwise be treated as equal citizens is tyrannical government – or as I commonly refer to them – medical tyrants.*** Just last spring, the World Health Organization, who have been providing COVID advice to the Centers for Disease Control and state health departments, entertained the policy suggestion that individuals infected with COVID should be removed from their homes so that they could be properly quarantined – all in the best interest of public health.<sup>iv</sup> ***Make no mistake, the policy which the World Health Organization entertained was health administrators’ version of red flag laws. Act now and worry about due process along with individual rights sometime in the future – maybe.*** How people of minority populations are treated in times of a declared crisis should not be taken lightly. My heart is grieved every time I watch the news or browse through social media only to see states excitedly line up minorities. In the name of public health, we have injected masses of elderly and disabled (many without cognitive ability to understand) with an untested, unproven, emergency use authorization injection simply because government bureaucrats and health administrators know best – or so we are told. ***Yes, health administrators are using the elderly and the disabled as primary test subjects just like totalitarian governments buried in world history.***

While I understand to some my statements thus far may be viewed as extreme; I am the canary in the coal mine. I stand here before you as someone on the front lines against overreaching government authority and a target of daily abuse. Nearly every day, no matter where I go or what I do, there is a good chance I will be talked down as if I’m too stupid, mistreated, and denied access/service. All of this because I am unable to physically comply with a mask mandate and am morally/intellectually opposed to another human being exerting physical force over me against my will. Now, largely ***the same groups of people that have created this nightmare in which I live seemingly wish to use the same mask of public health for gun control as they have for COVID.***

The mere suggestion that disconnected bureaucrats will adequately address gun violence from the vantage point of a public health crisis is horrifying. As noted earlier, the Second Amendment guarantees the individual right to keep and bear arms. Individuals with disabilities are 2.5 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than those without.<sup>v</sup> It was not until 2009 government saw fit to extend protections that are provided to other minority victims of hate crimes to people

with disabilities. Between 2009 and 2011, nearly one million people with disabilities were victims of violent crimes, including rape, sexual assault, robbery, and physical assault such as beatings, stabbings, and other acts of violence.<sup>vi</sup> These statistics are only the tip of the iceberg as they only represent abuses reported to the police. ***As the foundations of our civil society continue to erode, the Second Amendment and firearms represent not only citizens resistance to tyranny but independent security and safety in a time of lawless chaos.***

### **Conclusion**

Like most of the other public health decrees to come from Washington, DC in recent months, the executive orders and potential legislation designed to address gun violence are sure to be a disaster. Returning to the failed policies of gun control only endangers the lives of minorities including those with disabilities. For example, to outlaw standard capacity magazines (in either a handgun or rifle) and require a manufacture standard at 10 or less rounds per magazine only magnifies the inherent physical disadvantage that exists for someone like myself as I could potentially be caught in a situation needing to reload with one hand. From my vantage point, ***how I breathe or how I adequately defend myself is my business – period.*** Backdoor gun confiscation via red flag laws has no place in the State of Ohio. ***No state resource should be allowed to be hijacked in order to enforce measures which infringe on our God-given rights. Additionally, anyone who violates the rights of a citizen of the State of Ohio without due process to enforce unconstitutional federal gun control should be held accountable under the law.*** Through House Bill 62, this committee and the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly can properly position the State of Ohio to serve as a firewall and an added layer of protection against federal gun control measures. I respectfully urge you to pass House Bill 62 in an effort to ***reject federal tyranny and reaffirm that the Second Amendment is not up for negotiation under any circumstances.*** Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Josiah Lanning

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<sup>i</sup> Library of Congress. (2012, May 10). *United States: Gun Ownership and the Supreme Court*. Retrieved from <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/second-amendment.php>

<sup>ii</sup> The Ohio Legislature. *Ohio Constitution with Amendments: Bearing Arms*. Retrieved from <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/laws/ohio-constitution/section?const=1.04>

<sup>iii</sup> The White House. (2021, April 08). *Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Announces Initial Actions to Address the Gun Violence Public Health Epidemic*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/07/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-initial-actions-to-address-the-gun-violence-public-health-epidemic/>

<sup>iv</sup> Caplan, J. (2020, April 07). *Coronavirus: WHO Official Floats Removing the Infected from their Homes*. Retrieved from <https://www.breitbart.com/health/2020/04/07/coronavirus-who-official-floats-removing-the-infected-from-their-homes-to-stop-spread/>

<sup>v</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2015, July). *Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009-2015 - Statistical Tables*. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0915st.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Disability Justice. (2020, August 11). *Violent Crime and People with Developmental Disabilities*. Retrieved from <https://disabilityjustice.org/justice-denied/violent-crime/>