

Testimony on House Bill 62
House State and Local Government Committee
June 9, 2021

Submitted by:
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Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing my written testimony in opposition to House Bill 62.

My name is Jennifer Weinbrecht. My roots as an Ohioan are deep. Various branches of my family came to Ohio in the early 19th century to farm this rich land, and I am proud to be a citizen of our heartland state, the home of great presidents, astronauts, scientists, inventors, authors and artists.

I am submitting testimony today in opposition to House Bill 62, a vague bill that puts our police and sheriffs in the odd position of being sued or losing their jobs if they follow federal laws, or use federal help in solving crimes that involve firearms. This bill reads like a recipe for disaster and blatant support for criminals when they use guns to commit their crimes.

Instead of proposing this bill, our legislators should be working to improve gun safety in our state.

I have always hoped that my children and grandchildren would continue to find Ohio a nurturing, welcoming state. I'm not sure they will any more. Unfortunately, many young families we know have moved away from Ohio. A large factor in these decisions is that, rather than support responsible gun ownership, they see a great deal of pressure in our state and local governments to promote unsafe and irresponsible positions that will result in the expansion of gun violence in our state and encourage criminal activity.

In an average year, 1,529 people die by guns in Ohio, and 929 of those deaths are suicides. Gun violence costs an average of \$937 per person each year in our state. Gun violence costs the US over \$280 billion each year. We have way more gun violence and gun suicides than all other wealthy countries combined.

For decades, alarms have been raised that gun ownership is under threat. Yet, gun sales and gun ownership in the US only continue to increase. Guns are everywhere, and are easy to obtain legally and illegally. Illegal trafficking of guns from our country spill over to nations south of us, where they are used by cartels to terrorize populations, which leads to mass exodus and is behind thousands of families seeking refuge here in recent years. We only need to look at some of the countries south of Mexico to see what our country could look like if we continue to encourage less reliance on the law and more reliance on "I'll take the law into my own hands" as a way of life for many of our citizens.

Our country has the highest per-person rate of civilian-owned firearms in the world, and more than twice the rate of the second highest country, Yemen. The idea that somehow the government is going to take away these guns is ludicrous. These false cries that gun ownership is under threat only serve to whip up more sales. A significant number of these sales occur online without basic background checks – 1.2 million in 2018. Ohio is one of the states with the highest number of online sales where no background check was conducted. This loophole makes it very easy for criminals to obtain firearms and it's very easy for online sales to cross state lines. Federal action is needed to ensure universal

background checks. Do we really want Ohio to become the source for the tools used to commit murders and suicides in neighboring states?

The majority of Ohioans, and the majority of gun owners, agree that responsible gun ownership involves safety training and safety practices, background checks, and “red flag” laws that allow families to appeal for help to temporarily remove guns from the hands of those close to them, before they kill others or themselves.

The statistics in my testimony come from [statista.com](https://www.statista.com) and [everystat.org](https://www.everystat.org).