

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

Submitted by Julia Elkus (Cincinnati)

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 62.

There is no disputing that firearm deaths in the United States constitute a public safety and public health crisis. More than 100 Americans are shot and killed, and over 230 injured, **every day**. We have witnessed steady increases in both homicides and suicides by gun over the past 10 years, and that trend continues unabated in 2021. Trends are even worse in Ohio than they are nationally: Gun deaths in Ohio have increased at twice the rate as nationally, up **34%** from 2010 to 2019, compared to a **17%** increase nationwide. In the past week alone, **since June 1**, twelve Ohioans have been killed and 57 injured by firearms. What communities were tragically impacted by this violence? Youngstown, Cleveland, Columbus, Lima, Elyria, Newcomerstown, Steubenville, Cincinnati, Lebanon, Dayton, Springfield, South Salem, Lucasville, Wickliffe, Campbell, Hamilton, Toledo, Jackson Township, New Richmond. Big cities, small towns, and communities in between – no place is exempt from the tragic loss of life and health from firearms.

The Second Amendment grants citizens the right to bear arms. But with rights come responsibilities. You have the right to drive a car – if you've demonstrated you can be a safe driver by passing a test and you can cover the cost of potential injuries by carrying insurance. You have the right to own a boat in Ohio – if you carry a permit and pass an education course. In 2019 there were 18 boating related fatalities in Ohio. There were 1,500 gun-related fatalities. With almost 1,000 times the number of fatalities, it seems beyond question that with the right of gun ownership should come responsibilities and safety guidelines that protect all Ohioans. **Common-sense gun safety laws do not interfere with the rights of gun owners — but they do keep guns out of the hands of those who cannot or should not possess them.** In the Supreme Court's *Heller* decision, conservative Justice Scalia reminded us that it is “not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose.” Again – with rights come responsibilities.

Given the lethality of firearms, and the Supreme Court's clear rulings that State laws cannot be used to nullify or ignore Federal legislation, this bill is both dangerous and

likely unconstitutional. The bill would have the impact of sowing confusion regarding who can legally own a firearm and who cannot, likely leading to even more gun violence at the hands of convicted felons, domestic abusers and the mentally ill. As we witness the daily toll of gun violence in Ohio and around the country, our legislators should be actively seeking ways of curbing these trends, not promoting them. If you truly care about the health and safety of your constituents and all Ohioans, you will oppose this legislation and instead seek solutions to the very real issue of increasing rates of firearm homicides and suicides throughout our state.