

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on SB 185, a bill to amend ORC section 3761.16 and enact section 5502.411 regarding a political subdivision's emergency powers when suppressing a riot, mob, or potential riot or mob and the preservation of rights regarding firearms during an emergency.

My name is Daphne Carr, a resident of Youngstown, Ohio and a member of the Northeast Ohio Action Medics, a group that offers voluntary first responder care to those exercising their rights of assembly.

I am writing because I believe that there are grave public health implications if SB 185 would be passed, as well as an obvious chilling of Ohioans' constitutional rights of assembly and speech.

This bill would make it difficult or impossible for there to be state intervention against armed counter protestors and armed bi-standers who might wish harm on protestors. This means that while those seeking to express their first amendment rights could be cordoned off by the state, others would be free to harass, intimidate, and potentially harm the assembled.

Numerous studies have shown that the mere presence of armed protestors creates an escalated potential for violence during public assembly, and that the mere presence of guns creates conditions for injuries within a crowd (even if there are not shots fired). If there are people who suffer injuries from intimidation by counter protestors, and they are already cordoned off by police, there would be no legal way for medical first responders to access the injured.

SB 185 would exacerbate this already dangerous situation by giving armed counter protestors a dangerous and unfair advantage to intimidate, render innocent people exercising their rights to the unnecessary potential for more violence and create dangerous legal and material spaces for lack of access to emergency medical care, which would result in injury or death.

As someone deeply invested in the safety of those expressing their constitutional rights of assembly and speech, I urge rejection of SB 185.