

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, Committee Members. I appreciate the opportunity to offer my testimony in opposition to 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 Pastor Hank Osmundson, a resident of Delaware, Ohio, Executive Director of Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio (UUJO).

I am grateful for the First Amendment right I have to offer testimony and it is precisely because of First Amendment rights guaranteed to all Americans that UUJO stands in opposition to SB 185.

The aim of this legislation to ensure access to firearms, ammunition, and even explosives to the general public in times of distress and emergency is a recipe for deadly violence. Even when protesters are “cordoned off” by local officials, those who possess firearms, ammunition, or explosives could not be prevented by law enforcement from bringing those same weapons into the cordoned off area.

Any appearance of intimidation of free assembly and free speech is a violation of First Amendment rights. The presence of “counter protesters” who are armed and face no possibility of those weapons being confiscated by law enforcement would most certainly intimidate anyone considering to participate in a public protest or free assembly.

Our democracy does not work when voices are suppressed. It works when there is ample opportunity for robust engagement, debate, and sharing of experiences and

ideas. Passing SB 185 would serve to tell the people of Ohio that even local officials and law enforcement cannot prevent them from being threatened by “counter protesters.”

It is a moral, American, and humane obligation to oppose this legislation. I urge you to please ensure that it does not become law.

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