



OPPONENT TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 215

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Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Mayors Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's largest cities and suburbs, we submit this testimony in opposition to SB 215. As mayors dealing with a nationwide surge in gun violence, we must do all we can to keep our communities safe and protect our law enforcement professionals who are on the front lines.

We submit this opposition testimony today on behalf of the residents of our cities and the law enforcement professionals who put their lives at risk to keep our communities safe. We oppose this legislation because we believe that passing this bill will increase violent crime, police-involved shootings, and more innocent victims being caught in the crossfire.

We echo the concerns of the law enforcement professionals who have opposed this bill. We believe passing SB 215 will put our officers at greater risk because it would allow the carrying of concealed weapons by persons convicted of misdemeanor assault of a police officer, even though now, such individuals cannot legally carry a concealed handgun (LSC analysis of SB 215, p. 2).

Additionally, by eliminating the requirement for a concealed carry license, SB 215 would effectively make it impossible for police to enforce gun laws. This is because without a concealed carry permit requirement, a law enforcement officer will have no way of determining whether that person is carrying a concealed weapon legally or illegally. This bill will also limit police officers' ability to protect our communities by stopping suspicious individuals from carrying a firearm.

In addition to increasing the risk to law enforcement, SB 215 would also endanger Ohioans. This is because it would permit Ohioans to carry concealed weapons without any training in the use of firearms or any background check. We agree with Hamilton County Sheriff Charmaine McGuffey who said in opposition testimony to the House version of this bill that: "Allowing virtually anyone in Ohio to conceal weapons on their person without training or background checks will make Ohio less safe. More than that, it will make the job of law enforcement even more stressful."

Gun violence is the most significant and dangerous challenge our cities face today and passing SB 215 will only make matters worse. However, gun violence is not just a city problem, it's an Ohio problem. The five Ohio counties with the highest gun-death rates per capita are Jefferson, Jackson, Pike, Gallia, and Meigs counties (<https://efsgv.org/state/ohio/>). We urge the committee to vote no on SB 215 and help us keep our communities safe and protect our residents and our law enforcement professionals.