

May 29, 2019

Chairman Becker
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH
43215

Dear Chairman Becker and Members of the Committee:

My name is Julie Womack. I am a former domestic violence prosecutor who practiced here in Columbus. I handled violence against women and children cases on both the misdemeanor and felony level. I am currently a resident of Mason, Ohio. Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony and consider my strong opposition to HB 178.

Victims of domestic violence almost always fear further injury from their abusers. They have good reason to be fearful - women in the U.S. are 21 times more likely to be killed with a gun than women in other high-income countries. In an average month, at least 52 women in the U.S. are shot and killed by an intimate partner, and many more are injured. In Ohio, at least 201 people were killed by intimate partners between 2013 and 2017 and **nearly 60 percent of them were shot and killed.** Access to a gun makes it five times more likely that the woman will be killed by her abusive partner.

House Bill 178 would change Ohio law to allow people to carry hidden, loaded handguns as well as other deadly weapons, without needing to obtain a permit, pass a background check or have any firearm training. By eliminating this common sense law you will be putting all of our communities at risk.

The Ohio Fraternal Order of Police has come out in opposition to this bill because it strips law enforcement officers of the ability to prevent people who are a danger to themselves or others, like certain violent criminals and drug offenders, from carrying hidden, loaded handguns in public. Under the current law, law abiding citizens have no problem obtaining a permit and learning how to operate their firearm properly. This bill would make it harder for law enforcement to filter out "good guys" with guns and "bad guys" with guns, and that would make life more dangerous for all of us.

The fact is “good guys” have bad days. Recently in Missouri, a law-abiding aide to a State Senator brought his loaded gun into a bar, which was illegal. He became intoxicated. An argument he was involved in escalated into a fight. His loaded gun fell out onto the floor. While being arrested, he said, “he wished his gun had been closer because he would have used it.”

If we want to protect Ohio citizens and ensure that gun violence does not increase, we need to be enacting laws that promote responsibility and accountability. We need laws that make it harder for people who might harm themselves or others to obtain and carry handguns – not easier. I am asking that lawmakers vote no on HB 178.

Julie
Womack