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SB 221 Sponsor Testimony

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

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Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee. Thank you for allowing me to give testimony on Senate Bill 221 or STRONG Ohio.

I recently introduced Senate Bill 221 which is Governor DeWine’s STRONG Ohio initiative to reduce gun violence in our state. I believe this legislation will make a meaningful difference in peoples’ lives and their safety. STRONG Ohio addresses safety protection orders, enhances background checks, establishes greater penalties for gun violence and requires rigorous constitutional due process.  
   
**Safety Protection Order**  
   
One of the primary goals of Senate Bill 221 is to separate an individual who is a danger to themselves or others from their weapons and get them the necessary treatment. An involuntary medical exam can be ordered to determine one, treatment for the individual, and two, is the individual fit to have access to firearms. If after a full due process hearing, the probate court finds the individual is prohibited from having weapons, law enforcement or family members can safely remove the firearms from the individual. The individual is not returning to their home before the guns are removed. STRONG Ohio is the only bill introduced that separates dangerous individuals from their guns, protects our police officers and ensures troubled individuals get the treatment they need so no gun violence ever occurs.  
   
**Enhanced Background Checks**  
   
STRONG Ohio creates a sellers’ protection order for private gun sales. This allows a seller to require the purchaser to first pass a background check before the sale of a firearm. While the critique of this portion of the bill is that it is not mandatory, there are enhanced criminal penalties if you sell to someone who is not able to own a firearm. If no background check is done and such an illegal sale occurs, the seller faces three years in prison. Additionally, this bill will improve background checks databases by timely adding protection orders and arrest warrants for serious crimes into state and federal law enforcement databases ensuring more accurate background checks.  
**Greater Penalties for Mishandling Firearms**  
   
Finally, the bill will enhance penalties for persons who sell or provide a gun to someone prohibited by law from possessing a firearm. A judge will have a new range of enhanced sentences for felony cases when a gun was used, possessed or brandished. The bill increases the penalty for those who are found with a gun while under a prohibition from possessing a firearm. The penalties for straw man purchases and selling a gun to minors are also increased under STRONG Ohio.

Thank you, Chairman Coley, for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony today on SB 221. I welcome any questions from the committee.