Good Afternoon,

I am Jane Hanlin, the Prosecuting Attorney in Jefferson County. I have been prosecuting crime in Jefferson County for 14 years and I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you on the issue of the Governor’s gun bill.

I should also tell you that I am married to a police officer, who has served on a Drug Task Force for close to twenty years and executes most of our high-risk search warrants alongside his fellow officers. Most of the warrants are executed in the City of Steubenville, which has struggled mightily with gun and drug-related violence.

My husband, brother and father are all strong proponents of the Second Amendment. They are all firearm owners and hunters. I have a concealed carry permit, as do many of my family members and we support the rights of all lawful citizens to own and carry firearms.

The Governor’s bill does nothing to harm those citizens. I am here in support of this bill because it addressed the primary source of crime in my county: felons and other individuals who should not have guns that are committing violent crimes in our county. This summer, a man who had just turned 18 and had already been charged with a violent crime as a juvenile shot a mother and two year old baby in a drive-by shooting in a residential neighborhood in broad daylight. Nine months later, that beautiful baby girl died. Had that child not died, the sentence that this man faces would be far less severe due to Ohio’s current gun laws, which limit the ability to seek harsh sentences for felons who repeatedly commit crimes with firearms.

As we continue to combat the drug traffickers who bring seemingly endless amounts of heroin, cocaine, fentanyl and even carfentanyl – a drug used to tranquilize elephants! – to our citizens, our officers are routinely confronted during the execution of search warrants with violent felons who have been repeatedly convicted of dangerous crimes involving weapons. In virtually every single drug raid, our police officers find multiple felons with multiple weapons, combined with ammunition designed to pierce the protective body armor of our officers. Under Ohio’s current Weapons Under Disability statute, the maximum penalty is a mere 36 months in prison. This bill seeks to enhance that penalty and to make the penalty even harsher for those who are repeat offenders. It does nothing to hamper the rights of lawful gun owners. As Ohioans, why would we want to continue to allow these violent felons to continue to terrorize our citizens and use their weapons to protect the drugs that are destroying our communities?

Heartbreakingly, much of our gang-related violence is committed by very young offenders and yet the penalty for selling a firearm to a minor is a felony of the lowest level, punishable usually only by probation. I ask you to consider the wisdom of such a low penalty when, in August of 2018, a 16 year-old child shot a 18 year-old over a $70 bag of marijuana in the city of Toronto. The person who gave that 16 year-old a firearm would, under most circumstances, be entitled to probation. This bill changes that and gives our judges the tools they need to hold adults who provide firearms to minors responsible for such reckless behavior.

This bill also addresses what are commonly known as “straw purchases.” In Jefferson County, we have seen a dramatic increase in offenders who are willing to purchase firearms for felons because they know that, if caught, they likely face nothing more than a sentence of probation. In September of last year, two separate offenders purchased two separate weapons for a convicted felon who has *twice* used a firearm to shoot another person – once of which resulted in the death of a 19 year old man. That repeat violent felon should not have been able to acquire a firearm and the two suspects who provided him with two more guns should face more than probation. This bill addresses those shortcomings of our current law and, again, does nothing to interfere with the lawful use and possession of firearms by law-abiding citizens.

I have heard suggestions that we can turn to the federal authorities for help with gun violence and, indeed, I am designated as a Special United States Assistant Attorney in the Southern District of Ohio. Our federal counterparts are happy to help us when they can, but their burdens are significant as well and they cannot be expected to handle every gun crime we encounter. As a State, we must tackle this problem directly and our statutes must have teeth enough to deter those who repeatedly commit gun crimes and those who seek to aid those felons. And when deterrence is not enough, our state statutes must contain penalties that allows our law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges to make sure that these individuals are removed from our communities for as long as possible.

Thank you.