



# Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association

Louis Tobin  
Executive Director  
House Bill 383  
Written Proponent Testimony  
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Chairman Wilkin, Vice-Chair White, Ranking Member Brown and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony today on House Bill 383 to increase the penalties for people who are caught carrying weapons under disability in two circumstances: (1) when the weapons disability is the result of a conviction for a felony offense of violence or (2) when the individual has previously been convicted of carrying weapons under disability.

We are currently in the midst of an epic rise in violent crime with major cities across the state and across the country setting records for homicides now for the second year in a row. While this increase in violence is most notable in our metropolitan areas, it is certainly not limited to them. Prosecutors across the state will tell you that they have seen an uptick recently in violence and in particular gun violence. According to a January 2021 report by the Police Executive Research Forum, 57% of 129 law enforcement agencies surveyed across the nation reported an increase in gun homicides from 2019 to 2020. The agencies serving the biggest cities reported a 75% increase. All agencies surveyed also reported a nearly 70% increase in nonfatal shootings. Maybe most significant for purposes of HB 383, 53% of respondents estimated they were seeing more people illegally carrying firearms than in previous years with one of the top reasons cited for the trend being that people had little fear of consequences if caught illegally possessing a gun.<sup>1</sup>

While there is no single clear-cut reason for the increase in violent crime it is at a minimum attributable to policies that have made it easier for criminals to obtain release pre-trial, that result in a slap on the wrist after conviction, and that send the general message to criminals that they can operate with some degree of impunity and without accountability. Public safety has suffered.

House Bill 383 is a refreshing step back in the right direction – a return to accountability and punishment for criminals who repeatedly break the law. The bill will keep dangerous individuals off the street for longer periods of time and send the message that carrying a weapon under a disability is not something that will be tolerated in Ohio. It is one important step in restoring public safety. The OPAA would like to commend the bill sponsor, Rep. Koehler, for his recognition of this problem and his advocacy on behalf of public safety officials to help address it. We encourage the committee's favorable consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.policeforum.org/criticalissues26jan21>