

Opposition Testimony on HB 51
House Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Katherine Sua Persang
May 22, 2023

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB 51. My name is Katherine Sua Persang. I am a resident of Hilliard and a member of Mothers of Murdered Columbus Children. I urge you to stop this dangerous bill that seeks to nullify federal gun laws and prevent law enforcement from cooperating with federal entities to keep Ohioans safe.

In other states that have passed bills like HB 51 — most recently in Missouri, where it has been ruled unconstitutional — law enforcement has said that the law made it much more difficult for state and local law enforcement to do their jobs. They filed letters and even a lawsuit supported by 60 police chiefs in opposition to the law. In this committee, you have heard from prosecutors who have explained to you how it would prevent the investigation, charging, and prosecution of violent criminals. Lou Tobin explained that “the cooperation and information sharing that takes place on these task forces is critical to law enforcement’s ability to remove violent firearms offenders from the street and to protect the public from violent crime.”

Beyond taking violent firearms offenders off our streets and protecting the public, I want to share with you why that cooperation with federal law enforcement is so important to mothers like me to solve the murders that stole our children.

My son Bryce Persang was murdered on September 16th, 2021. 2021 was the deadliest year in the history of the City of Columbus, and the day my son was murdered also made history as the deadliest day in Columbus, with five shootings in nine hours resulting in four homicides. My son was the second homicide of the day and became the 151st homicide victim of that year. Out of those four homicides of the day my son's case is the only one that remains unsolved.

It took 9 and 1/2 months before arrest warrants were issued for his murderers. But a month later I was informed that the suspects had fled the country within 48 hours of murdering my son. I was also informed at that time that there would be no further investigation into my son's case and that his case would be then turned over to the Cold Case unit. They obtained this information from the US Marshal's office. I can only express upon learning this news that I felt very much the same as when I received the

news that my son had been shot and killed. Any hope that we had felt a month before had been taken away from us.

My son's case then remained stagnant until late October of 2022. In numerous fiery emails up the chain of command, I insisted that they seek guidance or help from other agencies, including federal agencies, in pursuing the investigation into my son's case. Coincidentally a tip had also come in in the month of October as well. It was then that they did reach out to other sources for help, including agencies at the federal level. In January of this year my son's case finally made the desk of the Franklin County prosecutor's office, and in February it went before a grand jury for an indictment. The indictment was necessary in order for them to further work with other federal agencies as well as Interpol in order to continue the investigation into my son's case, as well as in the capture and extradition of the suspects that murdered my son. I was informed just last week that the Interpol is now finally involved in the search for the suspects that murdered my son. In sum, it is only as a result of cooperation between local and federal agencies that my son's murder has been solved.

House Bill 51 if passed would have very damning consequences to myself and my family. It would hurt the future of my son's justice. These partnerships and collaborations that the CPD is having with federal agencies is absolutely necessary in order for there to be justice at all in my son's case. This bill would also make it harder for the prosecutors to add additional charges to the individuals besides the murder of my son. Many federal laws were broken by these individuals. This bill would not only hurt my family but countless other families of unresolved murders. I am asking to consider my story before you vote on the passage of this bill. Put yourself in my family's shoes for just a moment, as unimaginable as it is. Please, remember my son and the many, many Ohioans taken from us through gun violence and vote against HB 51.

Thank you for hearing my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you have.