

HB51
Government Oversight Committee
May 22, 2023
by Shela Blanchard

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan, and Government Oversight Committee. My name is Shela Blanchard and I am a concerned citizen of Columbus, Ohio. I wish to voice my strong opposition to HB51. It will not only make Ohio a more dangerous state but it is unconstitutional and states that have passed it are costing taxpayers money while their lawmakers defend this legislation instead of doing the job to secure their constituents public safety.

In 2019, I endured one of the most devastating losses in my life. Monica, my niece, her friend Bea, my childhood friend Derrick and 6 other were murdered, and 27 others wounded in Dayton, Ohio. You all remember that right? Each person has a family, mothers, fathers, children, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles and friends that still today are devastated by this heinous preventable act.

The shooter, previously expelled from school for writing a hit list, and other acts, decided to execute his plan on the lives of innocent people. He plotted and planned his attack, ordered the items on line and without fail destroyed the lives of 36 families, an entire city and the state. You know his weapon of choice.

A Dayton police spokeswoman said the suspect modified his weapon by **adding a brace**. Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl, speaking at a Monday morning news conference, pulled no punches in offering his thoughts on the gun. "It's fundamentally problematic to have that level of weaponry in the civilian environment," Biehl said. "It was modified in essence to function as a rifle, and to avoid any legal prohibitions."¹

HB 51 will make federal gun safety laws unenforceable in Ohio and will penalize cities and counties for enforcing federal laws. This is exactly the opposite of what we need in our communities to be safer. Studies show that states with looser gun laws suffer more gun deaths than states with stricter gun laws.

For some reason, the heinous acts in Dayton seem to have left the memory of some of our legislators, I can't say all. Why do I say that, because since August 2019, constituents of the entire state have asked, close the loopholes on gun sales, ie internet, and gun shows. Not close the door on sales, but to close the door on the loophole that continues to allow individuals to take a weapon and modify it into a weapon of mass destruction. Due to his history he should not have had a weapon at all, but due to weak laws in Ohio he was able to purchase the weapon legally. Since 2019 Ohioans overwhelmingly have called for background checks on all firearm sales; extreme protection orders, with due process. What we have been handed in return are more extreme gun laws "guns everywhere" without accountability.

¹[Gunmaker marketed Dayton shooter's weapon as an 'orchestra of metal and hellfire' \(nbcnews.com\)](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/health/gunmaker-marketed-dayton-shooter-s-weapon-as-an-orchestra-of-metal-and-hellfire-n1234567)

I ask you to remember the lives taken that day, these were your constituents, the murder of our loved ones proves to us that this can happen to any of us; it is our business to stand up and speak for those murdered by senseless gun violence. Ohio August 2019 could have been prevented. This bill will only make it easier, not only for this incident to occur again, but every woman that is being held at gun point right now as you read this by her Domestic Abuser.

In Dayton, the shooter carried what authorities initially described as a .223-caliber high-capacity rifle, but **is technically classified as a pistol**. He also had 100-round drum magazines, according to the Dayton Police Department, allowing him to shoot up to 100 rounds before pausing to reload. With the high capacity, **he killed nine people and injured 27 more in just 30 seconds** before he was shot and killed by police. Fully loaded, his magazines would have carried 250 rounds of ammunition.²

I ask that you please protect Ohioans and the United States Constitution by opposing this terrible piece of legislation. I ask you not to look away. Don't Look Away from the devastation our families and the families of everyday gun violence endure.

Thank you for your time,

Shela Blanchard

² [What we know about the El Paso and Dayton shooters' guns | PBS NewsHour](#)