

Testimony on HB272

Government Oversight Committee

Date: November 14, 2023

Submitted by: Michelle Lee Heym

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present opposition testimony to **HB272**. My name is Michelle Heym, I am a concerned mom from Powell, Ohio. Our family moved from West Simsbury, CT in August of 2015, 2 ½ years after we were all traumatized, when the girls were on lockdown during the Sandy Hook massacre. This experience has caused me to be a passionate advocate for common sense gun policies in Ohio and across the country.

HB272 is a dangerous bill that will put judges, magistrates, and court employees who are still in the building when court is not in session. The text of the 2nd Amendment is “A well regulated Militia, with a capital M, being necessary to the security of a free State, with a capital S, comma, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, capital A, shall not be infringed. The ambiguous nature of the 2nd Amendment claims the lives of 44,000 Americans every year, not to a war, not too drugs, but to a predictable and preventable reality that is of epidemic proportions. It is absurd to put the convenience of conceal carry over public safety, safety of law enforcement and innocent civilians. If you’re new to the extreme and dangerous policies of gun ownership in Ohio, established by the majority in this statehouse, anybody can buy a gun in Ohio in 2023, with no background check, no training, and no safety license.

Just because a court is not in session, does not preclude the building from being a sensitive place. There was a bill thrown out last general assembly, HB455, I implore all lawmakers to look up this bill for the reasoning of why it never became law. Doctors, nurses, teachers, shop owners, and regular citizens wrote to the committee and Speaker of the House because this bill would have allowed permitless concealed carry in sensitive places, and the citizens of Ohio said No! In HB272, we are talking about the same thing. A building that has a courthouse is a sensitive place and should never allow permitless concealed carry. The building is just as sensitive when the court is not in session because human emotions don’t just go away when the issues are not in deliberation before a judge. This bill is dangerous for public safety, for anyone that finds themselves in this municipal building before, during or after the court is in session. I beg you to throw this bill out.

[Prohibit Guns in Sensitive Areas | Everytown Research & Policy](#)

Sensitive areas are always unsafe for guns.

In addition to keeping guns out of schools and off campuses, all states should prohibit civilians from carrying guns in sensitive places such as daycare centers, playgrounds and other places where children gather, bars and restaurants that serve alcohol, public demonstrations, rallies, airports and courthouses. These last three places are all locations where politically-motivated violence is always a possibility. Erring on the side of caution is a wise course of action. **Ohio has laws prohibiting guns in or at these sensitive areas to help protect public safety, while allowing guns in these sensitive areas undermines it.** Just because a court is not in session, doesn't mean the building is not susceptible to this same sensitive nature. We must have laws to combat the extreme and dangerous behaviors of criminals, or anybody that has experienced trauma or is under duress as in a divorce case, or child custody case.

Ohio Judicial Conference, the voice of all Ohio Judges, has reviewed this bill and has serious concerns re the expanding the accessibility of deadly weapons in or near court facilities. They never have allowed firearms in the buildings before. Why should they now. Courts are places where disputes are settled, where justice is administered and where emotions run high. I am honored to know someone in this room that worked in child support services, involving paternity cases, where 2 sides often don't agree with each other, and both sides may need to frequent the building when court is not in session. I don't want Baby Daddy #1 dropping off documents when Baby Daddy #2, Mother and child meet with their lawyer to review the case. Every day, court facilities are the sites of volatile, highly emotional proceedings, divorces, child-custody determinations, criminal sentencing in murder and gang related crimes, competency determinations, employment disputes, and will disbursements, to name just a few examples.

In Jefferson County in 2017, judges were the target. A common pleas judge was targeted and shot as he was making his way into the building. The rules of Superintendence require prohibition on weapons for this very reason.

Just recently Judge Wilkinson, a county circuit court judge, was in his own driveway – with his wife and son at home – when he was shot, Albert said.

Wilkinson's death spurred a wave of heightened security for judges throughout the county. "Out of precautionary reasons, last night troopers were deployed to protect judges residing in Washington County," Maryland State Police said Friday. The court where Wilkinson worked employed a "high-level" of security, and all judges and court personnel received increased security following Wilkinson's death, Circuit Court Administrative Judge Brett Wilson told CNN. Wilkinson's killing marks the latest in a series of threats and attacks against judges or their families. More than 1,300 threats or

possible threats among federal court personnel were investigated in fiscal year 2022, according to the US Marshals Service.<https://www.cnn.com/us/maryland-judge-shooting-suspect-dead/index.html>

Can we just be sensible, Permitless conceal carry, hidden, carrying a loaded concealed handgun in a building with a courthouse with no permit, no background check, and no training. In a courthouse, somewhere where emotions run high, someone who has never picked up a firearm can go purchase one and begin to carry with absolutely no experience of safety or shooting that firearm. Absolutely not

All men and women are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, as it states in the Declaration of Independence, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Vote No for this reckless bill, that proposes to protect people in a courtroom but not anybody in the same building when court not in session, it doesn’t make any sense. Please Vote No!

**An example of this nonsensical behavior. Under HB 272, an Ohio concealed carry permit holder—*someone just like concealed carry licensee DeWayne Craddock below--* who is unstable and intent upon shooting Ohio government employees, judges, prosecutors, court personnel, witnesses, or litigants could simply and legally walk through security (with his concealed carry permit) into such government office building while court is “not in session” and *then* execute his murderous plan against victims of his choosing, including those in a courtroom that later comes “into session” after the shooter has legally entered. [Perceived Grievances Drove Virginia Beach Gunman to Kill 12, F.B.I. Finds - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

“The shooter’s inflated sense of self-importance contributed to this conflict and led him to believe he was unjustly and repeatedly criticized and slighted,” the bureau concluded. “Violence was viewed by the shooter as a way to reconcile this conflict and restore his perverted view of justice.”

To quote Nicole Hockley, “I know what it’s like to get the news that a loved one is never coming home, and my heart is absolutely shattered for the families who just received that excruciating news and for the entire community that has been forever changed by this tragedy.” Nicole’s son was murdered at Sandy Hook Elementary.

It is absolutely mind-splitting that we are foolishly considering HB272, creating a dangerous environment where people work, while 120 families mourn every single day in this country because their loved ones were shot and killed with a firearm. You all, as elected officials, are spending my tax dollars, considering “allowing conceal carry in certain buildings with a courtroom.” Absolutely not.

This bill is against common sense gun safety policies and at it's core is anti-public safety, anti-law-enforcement, anti-victim, and frankly unconstitutional.

Thank you for allowing me to testify, I'm happy to answer any questions