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9th Senate District | 135th General Assembly

Sponsor Testimony – Senate Bill 78, Veterans & Public Safety Committee May 30, 2023

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Wilson, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 78, To Restore local authority to regulate firearms-related conduct. This legislation is a reintroduction of Senate Bill 76 from the last General Assembly, and would return home rule to local governments to fight gun violence.

In 2006 the state legislature of the 126th General Assembly passed House Bill 347, often referred to as the “preemption law”. This piece of legislation bars political subdivisions, such as cities or counties, from regulating firearms, their components, ammunition, and knives. This legislation has prevented numerous attempts to address gun related violence, accidents, and deaths throughout our state since its passage in 2006.

Those who supported that legislation argued that we need “uniform” legislation in regard to firearms across the state to ensure the protection of the 2nd amendment, however, they have routinely failed to consider the ongoing consequences as a result of the “one size fits all” sentiment of H.B. 347. The reality is, Ohioans could have had the power, for almost 20 years now, to enact more safety measures to protect and educate their communities on firearms but our legislature has made those efforts impossible.

In 2018, following the October 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas where a gunman used an AR-15 fitted with a bump stock to kill 60 people, the City of Cincinnati attempted to ban bump stocks – trigger activators – creating a misdemeanor offense for any violation. Unfortunately this effort was blocked by the Hamilton County court ruling that bump stocks are essential to the function of a least *some*

guns and therefore cannot be regulated without violating the U.S. and Ohio Constitutions. In 2022 of the 64 people killed in shootings in Cincinnati, 14 were children. One of those children was a 3 year old, who was accidentally shot and killed by his 6 year old brother after getting ahold of their fathers loaded handgun.

My question becomes; if we cannot regulate the accessories to a gun, the requirements to buy and carry a gun, the proper storage of guns, and the sale of guns in our state, how are we to protect our communities from the unintended consequence from this negligence of oversight.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2021, firearms accounted for nearly 19% of all childhood deaths (ages 1-18). In no other comparable country are firearms within the top four causes of mortality among children.

We need to understand that different areas may need different protections to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all people within that community. How will we ever see a significant change to a serious issue if Ohioans are not offered support by the state? Are the lives we continue to lose to gun violence truly worth less than the right to accessorize an individual's gun? We are not seeking to infringe on the 2nd amendment, we are seeking to open the possibility of the real solutions to address the issue of gun related violence that continues to plague our communities.

Thank you, Chair Hoagland and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 78. We welcome any questions at this time.