

My name is Dr. Andrew Schames. I'm a specialist in Internal Medicine. I'm on the medical faculty at the Ohio State University, but I speak today for myself and not for the University or Medical Center. I would like to express my opposition to HB 178, which would allow permitless carry of deadly weapons in the state of Ohio.

Judging from the testimony in support of this bill, advocates of permitless carry envision those who would be served by this law as responsible citizens who understand gun safety and can be trusted to use their weapons responsibly.

However, it is obvious that guns are not always used in a responsible fashion. In Ohio in 2017, there were 1,589 deaths due to firearms - more than due to motor vehicle accidents. The highest per capita rates were in Montgomery and Clark counties. Homicide and suicide are among the top ten causes of death for Ohioans under the age of 58; and in 2017, 75% of homicides and 53% of suicides were due to firearms.

As a physician, I see the many tragic mishaps that occur when guns are used impulsively, unsafely, or for criminal purposes. Among my patients are some who have been wounded by random gunfire while sitting in cars or walking out of business establishments. They had committed no crimes, provoked or threatened no one. They now live with missing limbs, paralysis and chronic pain.

I have several women in my practice who have been kept in abusive situations by a male partner who has threatened to shoot them or their children if they leave. I have patients who have been witness to, or lost loved ones, in individual acts of violence and in mass shootings. I can tell you that the loss of a loved one to homicide is a wound that time does not heal.

Any physician who has worked in a trauma center sees, on a very regular basis, the effect of street violence, drunken altercations and suicide attempts using firearms.

Because of the endless succession of mass shootings we see on the news, public fear of people with guns is very prevalent. Children know, now, that they could be gunned down in their school, in a park, in a movie theater. Just recently, my daughter insisted that we leave a movie halfway through when a single man walked in and sat down in the back of the theater.

She said “Daddy, I’m scared. I think he might be a shooter” and she would not calm down until we left.

HB 178 contains several provisions that I believe would endanger many innocent Ohioans.

- It would eliminate the requirement for safety training for those wishing to carry concealed weapons. This would allow people to go into public places with deadly weapons for which they have no training or experience. I agree completely with the Buckeye Sheriff’s Association and the other law enforcement officials who testified that the training in safe firearm use required under current law is essential to ensure that those carrying weapons in public places know how to do so safely and understand the laws pertaining to where they can carry and use a firearm. In several well-conducted national studies, it has been shown that there is no increase in firearm deaths or accidents in states with concealed carry laws when - and because - those laws mandate safety training. However, importantly, in states that adopted permitless carry, there was a marked increase in rates of firearm homicide and injury ¹⁻⁴.
- HBR 178 would reduce the restrictions on persons with a criminal record carrying guns in public. Specifically, the proposed law would allow those with a history of multiple counts of violent misdemeanor to carry concealed weapons without a permit. It’s been shown repeatedly in studies that a history of violent misdemeanor behavior predicts the use of a gun for intimate partner violence and domestic abuse-related homicide ⁵⁻⁷. Thus, HB 178 would make it easier for domestic abusers to obtain and carry weapons that will be used to threaten, injure and murder their partners.
- HB 178 would allow persons with a history of drug convictions to carry concealed weapons. It’s well-known, and supported by many epidemiological studies, that substance abuse increases the risk of firearm violence and homicide ⁸⁻¹¹.
- Finally, HB 178 would expand the range and lethality of weapons that can be carried into public places. This would allow would-be mass shooters to position themselves more easily in crowded places where they can to the most damage, endangering all of us.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that not everyone who wants to carry a gun in public is necessarily a law-abiding citizen whose main concern is public safety. HB 178 would allow people with a history of violent, illegal behavior and substance abuse to bring highly lethal firearms into public places without notifying law enforcement officials. Statistics, studies, the

experience of other states, and plain common sense tell us that this will lead to increased gun-related homicides, serious injuries, crime, and illegal gun trafficking. Existing laws already allow responsible gun owners to carry a pistol in public – which seems quite sufficient for self-defense. I hope that legislators will consider public safety as their first priority, and will vote against the weakening of these laws contained in HB 178.

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