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Thank you Chairman LaFave and Members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 4771 as part of a package that would legalize carrying a concealed handgun, provided an individual is eligible to receive a concealed pistol license (CPL).

This legislation, known as "constitutional carry" or more simply "right to carry," would put Michigan in line with 16 other states. Most of these states previously had some form of licensing requirement, although one, Vermont, has never enacted any concealed carry restriction in its entire history. Among those states to have recently enacted right-to-carry, none have reported an increase in gun violence since doing so.

This is what one would expect, because 1) those using firearms to commit violent crime don't obey the law as it is and 2) the overwhelming majority of law-abiding citizens eligible and desiring to carry a concealed handgun have already obtained a permit to do so.

Throughout Michigan about 1 in 12 (8.3%) residents older than 21, over 500,000 people, have a valid CPL. Of course, the rate is higher in many counties. 8.5% of Wayne County residents over 21 have a CPL, the figure in Macomb County is 9.2%, and Oakland County is right on the average at 8.3%.¹

As a practical matter, the major impact of this legislation would be that those who are eligible and wish to carry a concealed handgun would no longer be required to pay money, be fingerprinted, take a short class, and wait weeks before being issued their permit.

¹ <https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/how-many-concealed-weapons-are-there-your-county-interactive-map>

Many would still choose to do so for the benefit of being able to carry in other states that recognize Michigan CPLs.² However, allowing those lawfully eligible to carry without first obtaining a permit would 1) relieve them of the hazard of misplacing the permit (under current law, one must have his or her CPL on hand when carrying); 2) relieve them of the legal hazard of inadvertently carrying with a permit that may have expired; 3) allow one deciding to carry to not wait weeks for approval; 4) save the expense of the permitting process; 5) affirm the constitutional right to keep and bear arms.

Notably, those without a CPL, but eligible to obtain one, may lawfully carry a handgun *openly*. This legislation therefore isn't about carrying so much as concealing. And there are valid reasons to conceal a firearm rather than carry openly. Concealing deprives a would-be assailant the knowledge of armed resistance. Additionally, it does not alarm people that may be fearful of firearms.

What about bad guys? Apart from the obvious fact that criminals do not obey laws, this legislation would not "legalize" anyone not currently eligible to have a CPL. Law enforcement can verify whether an individual is CPL-eligible as easily as they can verify a CPL.

Fundamentally, carrying a concealed handgun is asserting a basic human right to self-defense as enshrined in the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution. Not only did the Founding Fathers believe that the right to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed, but long before the Fourteenth Amendment extended the constitutional protection of citizens from federal legislation to state legislation as well, the Second Amendment did so by acknowledging the necessity of a militia to a free state (because a state *cannot* have a well-regulated militia if its citizens are disarmed).

Law-abiding citizens should not need to beg the government for permission to carry a firearm. Licensure, even under "shall issue" terms, converts the right to bear arms into a mere privilege. People should not have to be photographed, fingerprinted, or registered before they can exercise their Second Amendment rights. Criminals certainly do not jump through these hoops.

² Michigan has CPL reciprocity with 39 other states. <https://www.gunstocarry.com/gun-laws-state/michigan-gun-laws/>

The Second Amendment is no different than any of the other protections enumerated in the Bill of Rights. That is, honest citizens should not need a government-issued permission slip; it is their constitutional right to do so.

Another noteworthy provision of my bill is its repeal of the statutory prohibition of carrying concealed in various enumerated places, such as churches, taverns, hospitals, college classrooms, day care centers, and theaters.

Here again, I note that criminals disobey laws, and the effect of these prohibitions is to ensure that violent criminals can safely assume their victims will be unarmed in these locations. Mass shooters, cowards that they are, target innocent people at these locations. According to the Crime Prevention Research Center, 94% of all mass shootings from 1950 through June 2019 have occurred in designated “gun-free” zones.³

Most of these statutorily “gun-free” zones are private property, and their owners are free to manage their own security and impose any restrictions on firearms they see fit. They do not need the state to dictate their policy, and indeed, should be free to adopt a policy that does not invite mass murder.

The right to carry a concealed weapon is more than the capability to intercede in a deadly emergency: it is a deterrent to these incidents. As right-to-carry laws and CPL ownership have proliferated across the country, so too has violent crime plummeted.⁴ As criminals seek vulnerable targets, it’s notable that CPL ownership is particularly on the rise among women.⁵ Only guns give the gentler sex the equal ability to defend themselves. The more women possess firearms, the less they will be targeted by criminals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 4771, and I look forward to any questions you may have.

3 <https://crimeresearch.org/2018/06/more-misleading-information-from-bloombergs-everytown-for-gun-safety-on-guns-analysis-of-recent-mass-shootings/>

4 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/191219/reported-violent-crime-rate-in-the-usa-since-1990/>

5 See for example: <https://www-1.thesubtribune.com/news/local/community/gateway/g-news/article54465370.html>