

The Honorable Vikki Goodwin
Testimony before the United States House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
The Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security for
“An Unending Crisis: Essential Steps to Reducing Gun Violence and Mass Shootings”
Thursday, May 20, 2021

Chairwoman Jackson Lee, Ranking Member Biggs, Chairman Nadler, and Ranking Member Jordan, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security Subcommittee. My name is Vikki Goodwin. I represent House District 47 in the Texas State Legislature.

Firearms safety issues are both deeply personal and a matter that deeply animates my legislative work. I am a gun violence survivor. When I was in my early 20s, my father was shot and killed during a home invasion. My father’s death profoundly impacted me. Over the years, my sense of grief and sorrow turned to a personal passion to work for my family, community, and state on firearms safety issues.

I deeply believe that the voices of firearms victims and their families must be heard in the halls of power. I joined the Texas House Homeland Security and Public Safety, the committee that hears legislation on firearms, so I can amplify the voices of victims to promote change. As a Committee member, I have had the opportunity in recent months to weigh in on a dangerous piece of legislation, HB 1927. This bill would permit people to carry concealed loaded weapons in public spaces without passing any background check or training requirement. Passage of this bill would significantly weaken protections and safeguards that are currently in place to protect communities from firearm violence.

Texas' firearms safety laws are already some of the weakest in the country. Texas' existing framework is already full of loopholes and encourages gun trafficking across state lines and into Mexico. At present, existing state law at least requires people to pass a background check and complete a basic safety training course to be licensed to carry loaded handguns in public places. HB 1927 would do away with requirement. Alarming, Texas does not universally require people to pass a background check to purchase firearms, meaning if HB 1927 were to become law, it would make it easier for people who cannot currently get a permit to obtain a firearm, including those with violent criminal history and those suffering from chemical dependencies.

The research is clear that flooding public spaces with more hidden loaded guns in more hands makes them *less* safe. A "good guy" with a gun does not save the day; it makes an already tragic situation more dangerous. Contrary to the notion that flooding our communities with guns will somehow reduce gun violence, a considerable body of research shows that states that have enacted permitless carry legislation are experiencing significant increases in gun violence. States that have weakened law enforcement authority to deny permits to people who might pose a danger to the public have seen an 11 percent increase in homicide rates and a 13-15 percent increase in violent crime rates.

In 2003, Alaska became the first state to enact permitless carry legislation. Since then, the state has seen the rate of aggravated assaults with a gun increase by 65%. In Arizona, where the

legislature enacted permitless carry in 2010, the rate of aggravated assault with a gun has increased by 8 percent—translating to 921 more gun-related aggravated assaults per year.

Like all of you, I am responsible for protecting my constituents and ensuring the safety of my community - which is what brings me here today. HB 1927 poses a significant threat to the lives and well-being of Texans. If enacted, we can expect more gun violence, not less. As legislators, I see our role as saving lives and preventing deaths. I hope today's hearing puts us all one step closer to fulfilling that goal.