

Father of Parkland victim testifies before legislative committee

Fred Guttenberg -- the father of 17-year-old Jaime, who died as a result of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Fla. -- recently testified before the Senate Government & Oversight Committee in support of H.B. 585, legislation proposed by Gov. John Kasich (R-Westerville).

“The similar law in Florida, which we call the red flag law, is working,” Guttenberg said. “Had this law been in place prior to Feb. 14, the weapons used by my daughter’s killer would have been confiscated and mass casualties prevented.”

The legislation calls for a ban on third-party firearm purchases, expansion of data-sharing among law enforcement organizations, and allowing family members, law enforcement officers and others to file with a court for protection orders that would allow for the seizure of guns from an individual if imminent harm is anticipated.

Also testifying in support of the bill was the director of policy for the National Alliance of Mental Illness Ohio, which believes that it could reduce suicide rates.

A volunteer representing Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America offered testimony, sharing her belief that the bill would allow for intervention when a family member – like her brother, who suffers from mental illness and has struggled with suicidal thoughts – is likely to harm themselves. Another volunteer – a victim of domestic violence – said the proposed law would help protect Ohioans who suffer domestic abuse.

Northmont High School student Alison Hamant testified, as well. “Changing nothing will fix nothing,” she said.

Former Senate President Tom Niehaus, who serves on Gov. Kasich’s task force on gun violence, said the bill includes “some common sense recommendations” from the panel for consideration by the legislature. “Some critics will say this legislation doesn’t go far enough,” he said. “Others will cry gun control.”