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TEXAS MOMS DEMAND ACTION CHAPTER GIVES TESTIMONY ON OPEN CARRY LAWS: CALLS ON LEGISLATORS TO FOCUS ON STATE BACKGROUND CHECKS LOOPHOLE AND LAX PERMIT, LICENSE AND TRAINING PROTOCOLS

(Austin, TX) April 7, 2014 – This morning, the Texas chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America testified in front of members of the Committee on Agriculture, Rural Affairs and Homeland Security, which is considering “recommendations on removing barriers to Second Amendment Rights, including but not limited to open carry legislation.”

“The open carry of loaded firearms in public should not be considered by Texas legislators until they address the lack of federal and state requirements for background checks on private gun sales in Texas,” said Hillary Rand, Regional Manager of the Texas Chapter of Moms Demand Action. “Current state law makes it easy for felons and other dangerous criminals, including domestic abusers, to get guns. Elected officials should focus on closing this dangerous background check loophole to protect Texas families before considering the larger and more complicated issue of open carry.”

Currently, Texas allows the concealed carry of handguns and the open carry of long guns (shotguns and rifles). Texas law requires a permit for concealed carry, which includes a criminal background check and basic safety training. Concealed carry permits are not issued to those convicted of violent crimes, who are severely mentally ill, or who have a history of violating court-issued protective orders. However, none of these safeguards apply to the open carry of long guns.

“Most Texans are surprised to learn that the people they see openly carrying in our streets and our public spaces are not required to have had a background check or to have received any firearms safety training whatsoever,” said Rand. “There currently is no screening or permitting process overseeing the open carry of long guns in Texas.”

Open carry activists have staged weekly protests to demand legislative action to allow the open carry of handguns by carrying loaded long guns in urban areas across the state. Activists have congregated in malls, store parking lots, restaurants and city parks in Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, Houston and San Antonio in an effort to “normalize” the open carry of firearms. Last year in Arlington, nearly 40 open carry activists protested four Moms Demand Action volunteers by standing in the parking lot with long guns.

“Make no mistake, what open carry now means in Texas is a movement toward unfettered, unrestricted ability to openly carry any kind of loaded long gun, anywhere and at anytime, including densely populated urban, suburban and commercial public areas, with limited if any ability on the part of law enforcement to assure that the carrier is in fact a law-abiding gun owner,” said Rand.

Texas members of Moms Demand Action requested to be able to testify at the hearing after learning that other gun lobbyists were invited by the Committee to provide testimony.

Rand said, “It is the duty of the Texas legislature to encourage responsible gun ownership by requiring background checks on all gun sales and enacting certain minimum requirements to carry a loaded gun in public. I ask this committee to focus efforts not on expanding open carry and encouraging activists who use their firearms to harass mothers and law enforcement officers, but to focus on legislation that would put appropriate safeguards in place for carrying guns in public and keep guns out of the hands of those who should not have them.”

About Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Much like Mothers Against Drunk Driving was created to change laws regarding drunk driving, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America was created to build support for common-sense gun reforms. The nonpartisan grassroots movement of American mothers is demanding new and stronger solutions to lax gun laws and loopholes that jeopardize the safety of our children and families. In just one year, the organization has more than 150,000 members with a chapter in every state in the country. The group recently joined forces with [Mayors Against Illegal Guns](#), the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country. For more information or to get involved visit www.momsdemandaction.org. Follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/MomsDemandAction or on Twitter [@MomsDemand](https://twitter.com/MomsDemand).

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