

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA
MIDDLE DISTRICT**

CITY OF HARRISBURG, MAYOR	:	
ERIC PAPENFUSE, POLICE CHIEF	:	No. 29 MAP 2020
THOMAS CARTER	:	
	:	
Petitioners,	:	
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
FIREARM OWNERS AGAINST	:	
CRIME, KIM STOLFER, JOSHUA	:	
FIRST, AND HOWARD BULLOCK	:	
	:	
Respondents.	:	

Appeal from the Order of the Commonwealth Court, entered September 12, 2019, at No. 1434 C.D. 2018, reversing the judgment of the Court of Common Pleas of Dauphin County, entered on October 9, 2018 at 2015-CV-354. Re-argument denied on October 23, 2019.

**BRIEF OF AMICI CURIAE CITIES OF PHILADELPHIA AND
PITTSBURGH IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
STATEMENT OF INTEREST OF AMICI CURIAE.....	1
STANDARD AND SCOPE OF REVIEW	2
QUESTION INVOLVED	2
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT	2
ARGUMENT	3
I. Introduction	3
II. Respondents urge the adoption of a lax standing threshold to get around the lack of specific facts demonstrating their interest in the case.....	5
a. Standing requires specific factual allegations of a direct, substantial, and immediate interest in the case.....	6
b. Courts rigorously enforce the rule that plaintiffs show a substantial, direct, and immediate interest and apply it to litigants challenging government action.....	8
c. Respondents state no facts showing standing, and instead propose a new theory of standing altogether.....	11
III. Respondents’ rule of standing would open litigation floodgates at great cost to municipal treasuries and the administration of justice.....	19
IV. Respondents’ theory of standing would require excessive judicial oversight of municipal efforts to address a public health emergency.....	24
CONCLUSION	30

TABLE OF CITATIONS

	Page(s)
Cases	
<i>Americans for Fair Treatment, Inc. v. Philadelphia Fed’n of Teachers,</i> 150 A.3d 528 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2016)	7, 18
<i>Arsenal Coal Co. v. Commonwealth,</i> 505 Pa. 198 (1984).....	8, 9, 10
<i>City of Phil. v. Armstrong,</i> No. 04036 (Pa. Com. Pl. Feb. 28, 2020).....	3
<i>City of Philadelphia v. Com.,</i> 575 Pa. 542 (2003).....	7
<i>Com. v. Scott,</i> 878 A.2d 874 (2005).....	21
<i>Connor v. Archdiocese of Philadelphia,</i> 601 Pa. 577 (2009).....	12
<i>Devlin v. City of Philadelphia,</i> 580 Pa. 564 (2004).....	24
<i>Driscoll v. Zoning Bd. of Adjustment of City of Philadelphia,</i> 201 A.3d 265 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2018)	21
<i>Firearm Owners Against Crime v. City of Harrisburg,</i> 2016 WL 1162283 (M.D. Pa. Mar. 24, 2016)	10, 12, 16, 22
<i>In re Found. for Anglican Christian Tradition,</i> 103 A.3d 425 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2014)	7, 17
<i>Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce v. City of Philadelphia,</i> 949 F.3d 116 (3d Cir. 2020)	1, 21
<i>In re Hickson,</i> 573 Pa. 127 (2003).....	5, 6, 7

<i>Leach v. Commonwealth</i> , 141 A.3d 426 (Pa. 2016).....	5, 12
<i>Nigro v. City of Philadelphia</i> , 174 A.3d 693 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2017)	21
<i>NRA v. Pittsburgh</i> , 999 A.2d 1256 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2010), <i>overruled by Firearm Owners Against Crime v. City of Harrisburg</i> , 218 A.3d 497 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2019), <i>reh 'g denied</i> (Oct. 23, 2019).....	5, 10
<i>Pennsylvania Gamefowl Breeders Ass'n v. Commonwealth</i> , 533 A.2d 838 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1987), 538 A.2d 645 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1988).....	18
<i>Philadelphia Entm't & Dev. Partners, L.P. v. City of Philadelphia</i> , 594 Pa. 468 (2007).....	21
<i>Pittsburgh Palisades Park, LLC v. Com.</i> , 585 Pa. 196 (2005).....	<i>passim</i>
<i>Robinson Twp., Washington Cty. v. Com.</i> , 623 Pa. 564 (2013).....	8
<i>Rufo v. Bd. of License & Inspection Review</i> , 648 Pa. 295 (2018).....	21
<i>Scott v. City of Phila., Zoning Bd. of Adjustment</i> , 633 Pa. 517 (2015).....	2
<i>Sierra Club v. Harman</i> , 529 Pa. 454 (1992).....	12
<i>Marrero ex rel. Tabalas v. Com.</i> , 559 Pa. 14 (1999).....	24, 25
<i>Waterfront Renaissance Assocs. v. City of Philadelphia</i> , 701 F. Supp. 2d 633 (E.D. Pa. 2010).....	21
<i>Williams v. City of Philadelphia</i> , 647 Pa. 126 (2018).....	21

Statutes

Harrisburg Code § 3-345.117

Harrisburg Code § 3-345.213, 14

Harrisburg Code § 3-345.4(A).....14

Harrisburg Code § 3-355.2(A)(1)15

Harrisburg Code § 10-301.13(A)–(B)16

Harrisburg Code § 10-301.13(B).....16

Pa. R.A.P. 12134

Pa.R.A.P. 127(a)33

Pa.R.A.P. 53131

Pa. R.A.P. 531(b)(2).....1

Pa.R.A.P. 213531

RULE 12733

RULE 2135(d).....31

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Chris Palmer, Dylan Purcell, John Duchneskie, and Julie Shaw, The Philadelphia Inquirer.....26

City Council, City of Pittsburgh Office of Management and Budget, https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/9281_Budget_in_Brief_2019-12-17.pdf (Dec. 17, 2019).....23

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David Hemenway et al., *Whose Guns are Stolen? The Epidemiology of Gun Theft Victims*, 4 *Injury Epidemiology*, 1 (2017).....28

Dep’t, 2019 Year in Review, at 6, https://www.phila.gov/media/20200630104252/LawDept_YIR20_Web.pdf (June 30, 2020).....4

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Ellie Silverman, *Two Teenagers Shot, One Fatally, in Afternoon Philly Shootings*, Phila. Inquirer (Dec. 23, 2019, 4:59 PM).....4

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Homicides in Pittsburgh, 2018, Allegheny County, https://tableau.alleghenycounty.us/t/PublicSite/views/CJ_Homicides_PGH_8-22-17_v2/Home?%3Aembed=y&%3AshowAppBanner=false&%3AshowShareOptions=true&%3Adisplay_count=no&%3AshowVizHome=no	28
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STATEMENT OF INTEREST OF AMICI CURIAE

Amici cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are the Commonwealth's biggest municipalities. Together, they provide city services, administer justice, and ensure public safety for over 1.8 million Pennsylvanians.¹ Respondents' lawsuit—and the Commonwealth Court decision allowing it to proceed—imperil these basic municipal functions by advancing a new and unworkably lax theory of standing. The theory invites all comers to challenge a host of laws crucial to the effective operation of municipal government, based on mere speculation that the laws might someday be enforced against the plaintiffs bringing suit. Amici have a significant financial interest in protecting their limited municipal budgets from the costs of defending such suits. They also have a substantial public policy interest in maintaining their legislative and executive powers to enforce local ordinances, including modest, common-sense gun safety ordinances, without interference by litigants whom they do not impact.²

¹ *QuickFacts: Philadelphia city, Pennsylvania*, U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/philadelphiacitypennsylvania> (last visited July 4, 2020); *QuickFacts: Pittsburgh city, Pennsylvania*, U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/pittsburghcitypennsylvania> (last visited July 4, 2020).

² No one other than amici or their counsel paid for the preparation of this brief or authored this brief, in whole or in part. *See* Pa. R.A.P. 531(b)(2).

STANDARD AND SCOPE OF REVIEW

This appeal presents a question of law, as to which this Court's standard of review is *de novo* and the scope of review is plenary. *Scott v. City of Phila., Zoning Bd. of Adjustment*, 633 Pa. 517, 526 (2015).

QUESTION INVOLVED

Whether the Commonwealth Court's decision to grant Plaintiffs, who have not been cited under the City of Harrisburg's gun control ordinances and for whom any harm is remote and hypothetical, individual and associational standing to challenge the City of Harrisburg's gun control ordinances, directly conflicts with this Court's jurisprudence.

Suggested answer: Yes.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Respondents lack sufficient facts to show standing. They ask the Court to lower the factual bar for standing, allowing litigants to challenge lawful municipal ordinances without specifically stating how the challenged laws affect them. Accepting this novel standing theory would negate standing as a doctrine, open litigation floodgates, drain municipal budgets, inject the judiciary into the legislatively-controlled area of limited firearms ordinance preemption, and hinder enforcement of common-sense gun safety measures. The Court should instead find Respondents lack standing.

ARGUMENT

I. Introduction

A proper judicial decision resolves a concrete dispute between parties. The doctrine of standing requires a plaintiff to demonstrate a stake in the litigation, thereby assuring a court that its exercise of judicial power is both proper and effective. A party's standing thus critically relies on the particular facts asserted to prove it. In this appeal, Respondents cannot demonstrate facts sufficient to establish standing. Rather, they seek a new rule of standing that would lower the factual bar and allow plaintiffs to haul municipalities into court to defend lawful ordinances without specifically stating how the challenged ordinances actually affect them. Respondents' theory of standing would entail doctrinal, practical, and political problems, while flooding municipalities with baseless suits, and, in the case of gun safety ordinances, layering judicial control atop a legislatively-enacted limited firearm preemption statute.³

Respondents' rule of standing would also have devastating effects on municipal budgets. Philadelphia spent over \$21 million on the City's Law Department in 2019, employing a team of over 200 lawyers and 100 professional

³ See 18 Pa. Stat. and Cons. Stat. Ann. § 6120(a), "*Limitation on the regulation of firearms and ammunition*" (emphasis added); Def. City of Philadelphia's Memorandum of Law in Opposition to Def.'s Motion for Permanent Injunction at 15–21, 25, *City of Phil. v. Armstrong*, No. 04036 (Pa. Com. Pl. Feb. 28, 2020).

staff.⁴ Those professionals litigated over 6,000 municipal Code enforcement cases that year, from which constitutional or other legal challenges like Respondents' are apt to arise.⁵ Those cases cost money; the City paid \$50 million in settlements, claims, and judgments in 2019.⁶ Litigation against Pittsburgh generates similar costs. A flood of litigation challenging municipal ordinances of every conceivable type would hike these and similar numbers for both amici, straining their ability to perform their most basic functions.

The human cost of a lower standing rule would also be stark. Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are already grappling with a gun violence epidemic. Philadelphia's emergency rooms are treating over a thousand firearm injuries a year.⁷ And the most vulnerable members of urban communities, children, are being shot and are dying at staggering rates. In 2019 alone, more than 100 Philadelphia children were killed by gun violence, and in 2018, one out of every 12 shooting victims in the city was under the age of 18.⁸ A flood of suits prompted by a dramatically lower bar for standing would hinder the enforcement of a number of ordinances,

⁴ City of Phila. Law Dep't, 2019 Year in Review, at 2, 6, 7

https://www.phila.gov/media/20200630104252/LawDept_YIR20_Web.pdf (June 30, 2020).

⁵ City of Phil. Law Dep't, 2019 Year in Review, at 6,

https://www.phila.gov/media/20200630104252/LawDept_YIR20_Web.pdf (June 30, 2020).

⁶ *Id.* at 7.

⁷ Phila. Dep't of Public Health, *Deaths and Injuries from Firearms in Philadelphia*, 5 (Sept. 2017), <https://www.phila.gov/media/20181106124821/chart-v2e10.pdf>.

⁸ Ellie Silverman, *Two Teenagers Shot, One Fatally, in Afternoon Philly Shootings*, Phila. Inquirer (Dec. 23, 2019, 4:59 PM), <https://www.inquirer.com/crime/north-philadelphia-shootings-teenagers-children-homicide-20191223.html>.

including basic gun safety laws addressing these tragedies. It would also deter municipalities from maintaining such laws; indeed, municipal officials beyond Pittsburgh and Philadelphia have previously reported this deterrent effect from the fears of outsized litigation costs.⁹ To avoid worsening these negative consequences for millions of Pennsylvanians, amici urge the Court to find that Respondents lack standing to challenge Harrisburg’s modest gun safety ordinances.

II. Respondents urge the adoption of a lax standing threshold to get around the lack of specific facts demonstrating their interest in the case.

Respondents ask the Court to jettison its long-established standing rules and adopt a novel and unprecedented theory of standing that would allow them into court without alleging that Harrisburg authorities arrested them, threatened them with arrest, or even warned of a potential enforcement action under the challenged ordinances. *See* Compl. at 13–20. Pennsylvania law does not allow this. Standing requires an “aggrieved” party and the specific facts to prove it. *In re Hickson*, 573 Pa. 127, 136 (2003); *see also Pittsburgh Palisades Park, LLC v. Com.*, 585 Pa. 196, 204–05 (2005). A finding of an “aggrieved” party generally requires a risk or threat of enforcement of the law plaintiffs are challenging. *See NRA v. Pittsburgh*,

⁹ Koltnow, Bo, *Gun laws come under fire*, WFMZ, https://www.wfmz.com/news/area/lehighvalley/gun-laws-come-under-fire/article_2a0ae8b2-ae5b-5ed5-8997-2a1e824d1eaf.html (Dec. 4, 2014) (reporting the concerns of Doylestown’s Borough Manager and Borough Council president in response to House Bill 80, which would have allowed gun litigants to sue cities over gun ordinances, but was invalidated as unconstitutional in *Leach v. Commonwealth*, 141 A.3d 426 (Pa. 2016)).

999 A.2d 1256, 1259 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2010), *overruled by Firearm Owners Against Crime v. City of Harrisburg*, 218 A.3d 497 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2019), *reh'g denied* (Oct. 23, 2019) (denying standing to challenge a gun safety ordinance because plaintiffs showed neither the threat nor risk of being fined for violation). But Respondents now ask the Court to craft a new, more permissive standing rule that would allow litigants into court without demonstrating even a *hint* of threatened enforcement, relying instead, in this case, on Petitioner-officials' generic statements endorsing the challenged ordinances and stating that they are generally enforced. Compl. at 18–19. This Court should refuse Respondents' invitation to rewrite Pennsylvania's standing rules for the reasons stated below.

a. Standing requires specific factual allegations of a direct, substantial, and immediate interest in the case.

Pennsylvania's law on standing is well-established. Standing exists if the individual "has somehow been 'aggrieved' by the matter he seeks to challenge." *Hickson*, 573 Pa. at 136, (quoting *Independent State Store Union v. Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board*, 495 Pa. 145 (1981)). An individual is "aggrieved" if they "can show . . . a substantial, direct and immediate interest in the outcome of the litigation." *Hickson* 573 Pa. at 136 (citing *Bergdoll v. Kane*, 557 Pa. 72, 84 (1999)). "A 'substantial' interest is an interest in the outcome of the litigation which surpasses the common interest of all citizens in procuring obedience to the law. A 'direct' interest requires a showing that the matter

complained of caused harm to the party's interest." *Id.* (citing *Bergdoll*, 557 Pa. at 84). Similarly, an interest "is immediate if that causal connection is not remote or speculative." *City of Philadelphia v. Com.*, 575 Pa. 542, 560 (2003). Plaintiffs alleging harm that is "wholly contingent on future events" "have no immediate interest" sufficient for standing. *Pittsburgh Palisades*, 585 Pa. at 205.

Bare assertions of standing are thus insufficient. Rather, plaintiffs "must *allege facts* that establish that they are aggrieved." *Pittsburgh Palisades*, 585 Pa. at 204–05 (emphasis added). Conclusory statements of harm—such as Respondents' allegations of a threat of enforcement resting solely on officials' general statements of policy—are not enough. Standing requires the allegation of *specific* facts. *See, e.g., In re Found. for Anglican Christian Tradition*, 103 A.3d 425, 431 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2014) (finding no standing for a litigant who "failed to set forth any factual averments from which" it could "be inferred" that he had an interest in the controversy sufficient for standing); *Americans for Fair Treatment, Inc. v. Philadelphia Fed'n of Teachers*, 150 A.3d 528, 534–35 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2016) (denying standing to an association that failed to allege facts in sufficient detail to show a member met the standing requirements for individual plaintiffs).

This Court strictly cabins standing for pre-enforcement suits to situations, not applicable here, in which plaintiffs face extreme dilemmas pitting fundamental professional, legal, and ethical requirements against each other, or face industry-

wide regulatory uncertainty. *See Robinson Twp., Washington Cty. v. Com.*, 623 Pa. 564, 602–03 (2013) (collecting cases). A statute forcing a doctor to choose between adhering to the law’s terms and adhering to his professional ethical obligation to share medical information with patients, for example, suffices. *Id.* at 603. Similarly, a regulatory enforcement action determining a regulation’s validity, threatening a regulated company’s very ability to operate or avoid penalties, with similar effects on the industry, suffices. *Arsenal Coal Co. v. Commonwealth*, 505 Pa. 198, 210–11 (1984). Respondents here allege no similar ethical conflict or dilemma at all. Simply put, the ordinances here do not force the plaintiffs into any ethical dilemma.

b. Courts rigorously enforce the rule that plaintiffs show a substantial, direct, and immediate interest and apply it to litigants challenging government action.

The Court’s decision in *Pittsburgh Palisades* vividly illustrates the core standing requirements under Pennsylvania law. In that case, the Court ruled that the plaintiffs lacked standing to dispute the lawfulness of a slot machine licensing scheme because they had not yet applied for or obtained a license under the challenged statute. *Id.* at 199–200, 202–06. The developer plaintiffs planned commercial and residential construction, including a gaming facility. *Id.* They “intend[ed] to apply for a gaming license” under the law but, at the time of their legal challenge, had yet to do so. *Id.* at 200. Plaintiffs challenged the statute’s

constitutionality, claiming standing as a “potential gaming license holder.” *Id.* at 203.

The Court rejected these allegations as insufficient for standing. It found the plaintiffs lacked a “substantial” interest because they did not allege “any peculiar, individualized interest in the outcome of finding [the statute] to be unconstitutional that is greater than that of any other citizen.” *Id.* at 205. Similarly, the Court held that plaintiffs lacked a “direct” interest because they failed to allege the law would “harm them, personally in any way.” *Id.* Moreover, the Court held the plaintiffs lacked an “immediate interest” because their allegations of harm were “remote or speculative.” *Id.* Like Respondents here, the plaintiffs had not subjected themselves to the statute’s terms, and alleged no enforcement action or threat of enforcement. *Id.* at 200, 203. They stated a mere “inten[t] to apply for a gaming license.” *Id.* at 200. This was insufficient. As the Court explained, “at this juncture they have not been issued a gaming license,” nor had their allegations of unconstitutional harm to the state legislature itself occurred. *Id.* at 205. The Court therefore concluded that “any possible harm to Petitioners is wholly contingent on future events. As such, they have no immediate interest in this constitutional challenge.” *Id.* The Court repeatedly invoked *allegations* plaintiffs made in their complaint, noting that they “must allege facts that establish that they are

aggrieved” and ultimately found that “there have been no allegations” meeting that standard. *Id.* at 204-05.

This principle that only an “aggrieved” party may invoke the judicial branch’s power to invalidate a law—and that mere “intent” to come within the law’s purview is not enough—applies with equal force to opponents of gun safety ordinances. Commonwealth courts have thrown gun ordinance challengers out of court for alleging “remote and speculative” harm in past cases.¹⁰ *See NRA*, 999 A.2d at 1259 (denying standing to gun ordinance challengers because their “remote and speculative” allegations of harm failed to show a threat or risk of being fined for violation). This makes sense. This Court has emphasized that standing is a “threshold matter” whose resolution is required “[p]rior to judicial resolution of a dispute” in the first place. *Pittsburgh Palisades*, 585 Pa. at 203 (citing *Bergdoll*, 557 Pa. at 83–84). Similar cases should yield similar resolutions; gun safety ordinance challengers must allege substantial, direct, and immediate, non-speculative grounds for standing—just like everyone else.

¹⁰ Importantly, before remanding this case for lack of standing, the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania afforded Respondents the opportunity—which Respondents themselves had requested—to amend their complaint. Respondents failed to do so. *See Firearm Owners Against Crime v. City of Harrisburg*, 2016 WL 1162283, at *1, *9 (M.D. Pa. Mar. 24, 2016); *Firearm Owners*, 218 A.3d at 504.

c. Respondents state no facts showing standing, and instead propose a new theory of standing altogether.

Respondents' conclusory allegations do not come close to satisfying these well-established rules of standing. They provide no basis for concluding that any of the challenged ordinances will be enforced against them. They show neither threat of enforcement nor allegations that Respondents will incur liability.

Respondents alleged proof of threat of enforcement are generic public comments made by Petitioners—Harrisburg's mayor and police chief—which generally reaffirm that the city will not repeal the challenged ordinances and that it regularly cites violators. Respondents allege in the Complaint that Mayor Papenfuse declared that “[t]he city’s not going to repeal its ordinances, because our police department feels that they are in the public interest, and I do too.” Compl. at 19 (citing Compl. Ex. B). Respondents continue, citing the same news article, that “Chief Carter declared that ‘officers regularly cite violators for reckless discharge of guns in the city and when minors are caught in possession of firearms.’” *Id.* Citing a separate news article, Respondents allege that the Mayor said, “Police do cite people for [the discharge ordinance] on a regular basis. That is a sensible measure.” *Id.* (alteration in Complaint) (citing Compl. Ex. C).

But the cited articles reveal on their face that these quotes are statements about the validity and utility of the ordinances, and make no threat to enforce the

ordinances against Respondents. *See id.* at Ex. B, C.¹¹ The comments were made in response to the creation of a civil cause of action within Section 6120, which would have allowed challenges to municipal firearms legislation, but was later deemed unconstitutional. *See Leach*, 636 Pa. at 81. While the news articles in question mention Respondents' suit against the ordinances and the ensuing policy debate, Petitioners' statements are not directed at Respondents specifically and in fact do not mention Respondents at all. *See id.*

Moreover, these statements are over five years old. In the ensuing half-decade, Respondents have not amended their complaint to add more compelling evidence of enforcement threats or to state that they have been arrested—despite a federal court's invitation to do so. *See id.*; *Firearm Owners*, 218 A.3d at 504 (noting no amendment despite leave to do so).

Nor do Respondents specifically state how they risk enforcement of the ordinances. *See Compl.* at 15–20. Respondents' Complaint is silent on all crucial factual details that would establish whether they have an interest that has been or might soon be “been invaded or infringed.” *Sierra Club v. Harman*, 529 Pa. 454, 456 (1992).

¹¹ The Court may consider material facts from both the Complaint and its exhibits. *See Firearm Owners*, 218 A.3d at 506 n. 12 (the court below, noting that Petitioners' standing challenge was a demurrer and that the court would therefore accept as true all of the Complaint's well-pleaded material allegations of fact); *Connor v. Archdiocese of Philadelphia*, 601 Pa. 577, 581 (2009) (noting that preliminary objections in the nature of a demurrer may be evaluated solely on a complaint's facts, then analyzing and quoting facts from both the complaint and its exhibits).

The Complaint is bereft of any facts demonstrating actions that Respondents have taken or will take to place them within the ambit of the challenged ordinances. Respondent Firearm Owners Against Crime (hereinafter “FOAC”) alleges associational standing through “a member, under the age of 18, from the City of Harrisburg, Dauphin County, who legally possesses firearms under Federal and State law.” Compl. at 16. The complaint adds that all three individual Respondents lawfully “possess firearms under State and Federal law” and that the ordinances could be enforced against them because (1) Respondent Stolfer “frequents, at least on an average bi-weekly basis, the City of Harrisburg . . . for political purposes both as an individual and in his capacity as President of FOAC;” (2) Respondent First “is a resident of the City of Harrisburg;” and (3) Respondent Bullock “works, and therefore commutes daily, into the City of Harrisburg,” *id.* at 16–17.

But none of these assertions sheds light on how the challenged ordinance could actually impact any of the Respondents. For example, the discharge ordinance provides that “[n]o person shall fire . . . firearms of any kind within the City, except at supervised firing ranges in bona fide educational institutions accredited by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and with the approval of the Mayor or Chief of Police, or at a firing range operated by the Bureau of Police.” Harrisburg Code § 3-345.2, Discharging weapons or firearms.

Respondents offer no specific allegations of how or when they are likely to incur liability under the terms of the ordinance. Instead, they reiterate that Petitioner-officials “have publicly stated both their intention to enforce the ordinance and their current prosecution of individuals pursuant to the ordinance.” Compl. at 37. They add that the “current enforcement of this ordinance has a chilling effect” on their gun rights without explanation as to how this chilling effect has manifested in their conduct. *Id.* Respondents do not allege that they will discharge a gun within Harrisburg, or, critically, that they will refuse to do so at an approved firing range, thus drawing liability. *See* Harrisburg Code § 3-345.2. They fail to show harm sufficient for standing to challenge the discharge ordinance.

Nor do Respondents say how they will violate the “lost-and-stolen ordinance” either. That provision requires “[a]ny person who is the owner of a firearm that is lost or stolen” to “report the loss or theft of that firearm to an appropriate local law enforcement official within 48 hours after discovery of the loss or theft.” Harrisburg Code § 3-345.4(A), Lost and stolen firearms. The ordinance also defines firearms, specifying barrel and overall gun lengths to which the law applies. *Id.* § 3-345.4(B). But the Complaint offers no allegations as to how the ordinance’s terms would apply to any of the Respondents. Respondents again quote Petitioner-officials’ media remarks on general ordinance enforcement, repeat their unelaborated “chilling effect” allegation, and add that they “fear

prosecution if one of their firearms are lost and stolen.” Compl. at 49–50. They do not explain whether or how they will lose their guns or have them stolen. Respondents allege no facts about the prevalence of loss or theft of firearms in their own lives or in their communities. They utterly fail to show the challenged ordinance’s harm to them in any way.

Respondents also fail to explain how they will run afoul of the “state of emergency ordinance.” The ordinance bars the “sale or transfer” of “ammunition, guns or other firearms of any size or description” in Harrisburg during a state of emergency declared by the Mayor. Harrisburg Code § 3-355.2(A)(1), Emergency measures. During an emergency, the ordinance also prohibits the display of the same items in shops, public possession of a rifle or shotgun, and authorizes the Mayor to ban public possession of firearms. *Id.* § 3-355.2(A)(2)–(3), (B). For alleged harm, Respondents rely again on Petitioners’ media remarks, an unelaborated “chilling effect,” and a statement that “Plaintiffs fear prosecution for carrying their firearm if an emergency were to be declared by the Mayor.” Compl. at 59–60. Respondents state no facts about whether an emergency is forthcoming or whether, if it were, they have plans to carry their guns about town. These thin

and conclusory statements are insufficient to demonstrate harm from the emergency ordinance.¹²

Respondents also cannot explain how they will incur liability under the “parks ordinance.” The parks ordinance bars hunting in the city’s parks and adds that, within parks, “[n]o person shall use, carry or possess firearms of any description . . . or any other form of weapons potentially inimical to wildlife and dangerous to human safety, or any instrument that can be loaded with and fire blank cartridges.” Harrisburg Code § 10-301.13(A)–(B), Hunting, firearms and fishing. It adds that, “[n]o person shall shoot or propel any object from any of the foregoing into park areas from beyond park boundaries or while in a park.” *Id.* §10-301.13(C). Do Respondents plan to go hunting in Harrisburg’s parks? They do not say. They instead fall back—for the fourth time—on the city officials’ media remarks and an unspecific “chilling effect” on their general gun and hunting rights. Compl. at 74–75. Respondents do not specify whether they have already hunted in Harrisburg’s parks or have plans to do so. Nor do they allege they will “use, carry or possess firearms of any description” in the parks for any non-hunting purpose. *See* Harrisburg Code § 10-301.13(B).

¹² The Commonwealth Court below agreed, finding no standing to challenge this ordinance because Respondents “fail to allege any facts in their Complaint under which we can conclude that this particular ordinance directly and immediately affects, regulates, or impairs the Individual Plaintiffs’ possession, use, or enjoyment of their firearms.” *Firearm Owners*, 218 A.3d at 510.

Respondents' allegations also fall short as to Harrisburg's "minor possession ordinance," which declares it "unlawful for any minor under the age of 18 years to have in his or her possession, except in his or her place of residence, any firearm" or "any implement which impels with force a metal pellet of any kind, unless said minor is accompanied by an adult." Harrisburg Code § 3-345.1, Possession of firearms by minors. This ordinance is specific. It carves out exceptions for in-home possession and adult accompaniment. Respondents' Complaint is conclusory. Respondents fail to offer any specificity as to how the ordinance actually applies to FOAC's minor member. The Complaint is barren of any discussion of whether this minor possesses a covered firearm or "implement," whether the minor is accompanied by an adult when possessing, and whether the minor falls under the in-residence exception. Such conclusory statements of harm are blatantly insufficient for standing. *See In re Found. for Anglican Christian Tradition*, 103 A.3d at 431.

Respondents' Complaint contains *no* allegations explaining how they are likely to incur liability under the ordinances they allege are unlawful. Failure to specifically allege how or when the ordinances will affect them means Respondents' interest in this case is fatally speculative and neither substantial nor direct. *See Pittsburgh Palisades*, 585 Pa. at 205.

The paucity of factual allegations for the individual Respondents' standing also defeats associational standing for Respondent FOAC. An association may show standing if one of its members has the direct, substantial, and immediate interest required by the individual standing doctrine. *Pennsylvania Gamefowl Breeders Ass'n v. Commonwealth*, 533 A.2d 838, 840 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1987), *on reconsideration*, 538 A.2d 645 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1988) (citing *Concerned Taxpayers of Allegheny County v. Commonwealth*, 33 Pa. Commonw. Ct. 518, 524 (1978)). FOAC's failure to factually allege how its minor child member who lives in Harrisburg violates the minor possession ordinance defeats that minor's individual standing, and therefore also vitiates FOAC's standing on the minor's behalf. *See Americans for Fair Treatment*, 150 A.3d at 536; Compl. at 15–16.

This Court's existing standing doctrine is sound. It ensures that only people who are "adversely impacted" by the matter they seek to challenge "have standing to proceed with the court system's dispute resolution process." *Pittsburgh Palisades*, 585 Pa. at 203. Because Respondents cannot show this adverse impact, they instead ask the Court to lower the standing bar for them, creating a new rule of standing without any requirement for specific factual allegations. This Court should refuse.

III. Respondents' rule of standing would open litigation floodgates at great cost to municipal treasuries and the administration of justice.

Adopting Respondents' new standing theory would accomplish exactly what well-established rules of standing are designed to avoid, unleashing a flood of baseless and costly-to-defend lawsuits against municipalities across the Commonwealth. Defending these suits in court would further squeeze city budgets already dedicated to other services. Given their size, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh would be particularly vulnerable to regulatory suits brought by plaintiffs without a concrete stake in the outcome. And, ultimately, the citizens of these cities would pay the price. The Court should forestall this eventuality by adhering to long-established standing precedent and declining Respondents' invitation to hike the cost of defending municipal regulations of every kind.

Philadelphia has much to lose from Respondents' proposed standing rule. The City's Department of Law spent approximately \$21 million in 2019.¹³ These funds pay for lawyers, support staff, supplies, purchase of services, and myriad other costs.¹⁴ That year the Department employed 347 people, including about 225 attorneys and 100 professional staff.¹⁵ Those professionals are busy; in fiscal year

¹³ City of Phil. Law Dep't, 2019 Year in Review Report, at 6, https://www.phila.gov/media/20200630104252/LawDept_YIR20_Web.pdf (June 30, 2020).

¹⁴ *Id.* at 2, 6.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 2, 7.

2019 the Department litigated 6,079 code enforcement cases alone¹⁶—cases from which constitutional or other challenges like Respondents’ are apt to arise. And of course, resolving cases costs money as well as labor; that same fiscal year, Philadelphia spent \$50.25 million on claims, settlements, and judgments.¹⁷ Administering these suits costs money as well. In 2019, the First Judicial District spent about \$113 million to process its docket.¹⁸ And, in total, the taxpayers of Philadelphia pay about \$133 million dollars to defend and resolve cases annually.¹⁹

A ruling for Respondents would increase these expenditures significantly. Granting standing to opponents of a wide swath of ordinances would drive up the number of suits filed against the City. There is no shortage of ordinances to which Philadelphia outsiders might politically object to and against which Respondents’ standing theory would allow them to litigate. In recent years, the City has defended challenges to its ordinances regulating lost-and-stolen firearms,²⁰ job

¹⁶ *Id.* at 6.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 7.

¹⁸ City of Phil., The Mayor’s Operating Budget in Brief for Fiscal Year 2021 as Proposed to the Council, May 1, 2020, at 79, <https://www.phila.gov/media/20200501075517/REVISED-Budget-in-Brief-FY21.pdf>.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 79, 80 (showing the First Judicial District’s and the Law Department’s 2018 spending, respectively, and adding the two together).

²⁰ WHYY, Ximena Conde, *The legal battle over Philadelphia’s lost gun reporting ordinance takes shape in court*, <https://whyy.org/articles/the-legal-battle-over-philadelphias-lost-gun-reporting-ordinance-takes-shape-in-court/> (March 6, 2020).

interview salary history questions,²¹ City property zoning,²² building height restrictions,²³ municipal salaries,²⁴ the security of vacant lots,²⁵ zoning rules for gaming facilities,²⁶ taxes on sweetened beverages,²⁷ car noises,²⁸ and more. Philadelphia has enacted ordinances covering almost every aspect of life in the City; its municipal code comprises twenty-two titles whose topics range from public health to housing to parks and beyond.²⁹ While some of these suits will be dismissed or resolved early, defending each case costs City taxpayers. Philadelphia would need more municipal lawyers, outside counsel, support staff, supplies, and other resources to defend suits against lawful ordinances uncontroversial within the City. The resulting overall budgetary pinch could mean less money for the other essential city services Philadelphia's citizens already elected to fund. It would also hurt the City Solicitor office's ability to devote resources to cases it views as truly crucial for Philadelphia's legal interests and instead would dilute and divert resources to non-priority cases. The City's power

²¹ *Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce v. City of Philadelphia*, 949 F.3d 116 (3d Cir. 2020).

²² *Driscoll v. Zoning Bd. of Adjustment of City of Philadelphia*, 201 A.3d 265 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2018).

²³ *Waterfront Renaissance Assocs. v. City of Philadelphia*, 701 F. Supp. 2d 633 (E.D. Pa. 2010).

²⁴ *Nigro v. City of Philadelphia*, 174 A.3d 693, 698 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2017).

²⁵ *Rufo v. Bd. of License & Inspection Review*, 648 Pa. 295 (2018).

²⁶ *Philadelphia Entm't & Dev. Partners, L.P. v. City of Philadelphia*, 594 Pa. 468, (2007).

²⁷ *Williams v. City of Philadelphia*, 647 Pa. 126, (2018).

²⁸ *Com. v. Scott*, 878 A.2d 874, 878 (2005).

²⁹ Philadelphia Code and Home Rule Charter, American Legal Publishing Corporation, <https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/philadelphia/latest/overview> (last visited June 21, 2020).

to enact and defend ordinances should not depend on whether municipal budgets can compete dollar-for-dollar with political action committee litigants from outside the City. *See, e.g., Firearm Owners*, 218 A.3d at 504 (identifying FOAC as a political action committee.)

This flood of suits would hurt the judiciary as well. Philadelphia's courts would experience a glut of litigation, with the City's local dockets flooded with suits from plaintiffs ardently opposed to any number of Philadelphia's ordinances but who neither work nor live in Philadelphia, and instead only "frequent[], at least on an average bi-weekly basis, the City" or "commute[] daily" into the City, as the Complaint here alleges. Compl. at 16, 17.

Degrading the administration of justice within Philadelphia would hurt ordinary Philadelphians. Residents rely on the reasonably efficient and smooth administration of justice for important affairs. The City's courts decide on custody, divorce, estate and property matters, tickets and citations, and criminal justice proceedings, among many others. The speedy processing of these matters would slow as dockets fill up.

The results would be similar for Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh spent about \$6.9 million in 2019 on the Department of Law, which handles the city's legal affairs.³⁰

³⁰ City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Comprehensive Annual Financial report, Year Ended December 31, 2019, Office of the City Controller, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at 58 (external (*continued*))

The Department is budgeted to spend approximately \$7.6 million in 2020.³¹ Defending Pittsburgh in court accounts for much of that spending; in 2018, the Department spent about \$3 million on personnel; professional and technical services; and supplies.³² Lawyers and other workers are a particularly important line item. In 2019, personnel cost the Department about \$2.6 million in salaries and benefits.³³ As of the first quarter of 2020, the Department employs 29 people full-time.³⁴ The lower standing bar Respondents seek would increase all these costs, reducing the Department's discretion to choose how and to what extent it defends the City in court.

The increased costs of administering these cases would create debilitating stress on both Philadelphia's and Pittsburgh's budgets and divert judicial resources to clearing already overstuffed judicial dockets. Before long, the Superior and Commonwealth Courts would feel the increased docket size too, as litigants aiming

pagination), https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/9317_FY_2019_CAFR.pdf (April 29, 2020).

³¹ City of Pittsburgh 2020 Budget in Brief as approved by City Council, City of Pittsburgh Office of Management and Budget, at 4, https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/9281_Budget_in_Brief_2019-12-17.pdf (Dec. 17, 2019).

³² City of Pittsburgh 2020 Operating Budget and Five Year Plan, Pittsburgh City Council, at 143, [https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/8055_Operating_Budget_as_approved_by_Council_12-17-19\(3\).pdf](https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/8055_Operating_Budget_as_approved_by_Council_12-17-19(3).pdf) (Dec. 17, 2019).

³³ See Pittsburgh Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, at p. 57, *supra* n. 32 (external pagination).

³⁴ City of Pittsburgh Quarterly Financial and Performance Report for the Period Ending March 31, 2020, Pittsburgh Office of Management and Budget, at 62, https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/9825_Quarterly_Report_-_Q1_2020.pdf (June 5, 2020).

squarely at settled precedent appeal the outcomes of these matters instead of settling. Respondents' new standing theory would therefore cause harm to the administration of justice for Pennsylvanians far beyond Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

IV. Respondents' theory of standing would require excessive judicial oversight of municipal efforts to address a public health emergency.

The new rule of standing that Respondents propose would not only invite a flood of litigation against municipalities, it would also put Commonwealth courts in the unwelcome position of having to oversee, and assume responsibility for, municipalities' efforts to combat a localized public health emergency, gun violence.

Pennsylvania law leaves crucial room for home rule municipalities to exercise their discretion in determining how to protect the health and welfare of their citizens. That discretion is strikingly broad. As this Court has recognized, "a home rule municipality such as Philadelphia 'may exercise any power or perform any function not denied by [the] Constitution, by its home rule charter or by the General Assembly at any time.'" *Devlin v. City of Philadelphia*, 580 Pa. 564, 573 (2004) (quoting Pa. Const. art. IX, § 2). And this Court has pledged to "not inquire into the reason, wisdom, or expediency of the legislative policy" adopted by the General Assembly. *Marrero ex rel. Tabalas v. Com.*, 559 Pa. 14, 20 (1999)

(quoting *Marrero by Tabales v. Com.*, 709 A.2d 956, 965–66 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1998), *aff'd sub nom. Marrero ex rel. Tabalas v. Com.*, 559 Pa. 14).

Here, the Pennsylvania General Assembly already has spoken regarding preemption of specified municipal gun regulations. *See* 18 Pa. Stat. and Cons. Stat. Ann. § 6120(a); Limitation on the regulation of firearms and ammunition. Under the statute, no municipality may “regulate the lawful ownership, possession, transfer or transportation of firearms, ammunition or ammunition components when carried or transported for purposes not prohibited by the laws of this Commonwealth.” *Id.* That preemption provision is limited. It expressly applies only to the regulation of “*lawful*” actions relating to firearms, and does not preempt all laws regarding firearms. Even so, municipal officials beyond Pittsburgh and Philadelphia report that the threat of lawsuits has deterred them from maintaining ordinances believed to be crucial to ending gun violence.³⁵

In the context of an actual controversy, a court may have to determine whether a particular ordinance runs afoul of the preemption statute. But expanding the concept of standing to facilitate unlimited challenges to municipal gun

³⁵ Koltnow, Bo, *Gun laws come under fire*, WFMZ, https://www.wfmz.com/news/area/lehighvalley/gun-laws-come-under-fire/article_2a0ae8b2-ae5b-5ed5-8997-2a1e824d1eaf.html (Dec. 4, 2014) (reporting the concerns of Doylestown’s Borough Manager and Borough Council president).

regulation would respect neither the authority of home rule nor the limited preemption policy adopted by the General Assembly.

A new overlay of judicial control in this area would handicap Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and other municipalities when they can least afford it. Philadelphia in particular is grappling with a gun violence epidemic. Last year alone, 1,435 people were shot in the City, the highest yearly total since 2010.³⁶ Aside from their use in robberies and assaults,³⁷ guns also fuel Philadelphia's homicide problem. In 2018, the City recorded 353 homicides, the most in a decade.³⁸ In recent years, firearms were involved in almost 82 percent of homicides in Philadelphia.³⁹ As of September 2017, firearm homicide was the leading cause of death among young black and Hispanic men in the City.⁴⁰ Not even a pandemic has abated Philadelphia's gun crisis. On July 5, 2020, 23 people were shot across the city, the highest single-day total since 2013.⁴¹ Six of the victims died, including a six-year-old boy.⁴² In total 35 people were shot over the same July 4th weekend.⁴³

³⁶ Palmer, *supra* n.2.

³⁷ Phila. Police Dep't, *supra* n.2.

³⁸ Rita Giordano & Bethany Ao, *Philadelphia Has A Gun Violence Epidemic. What If It Were Treated Like Any Other Contagious Disease?*, Phila. Inquirer (Dec. 2, 2019, 5:00 AM), <https://www.inquirer.com/health/gun-violence-murder-victims-public-health-kenney-philadelphia-20191202.html>.

³⁹ Phil. Dep't of Public Health, *supra* n.3 at 1.

⁴⁰ Phil. Dep't of Public Health, *supra* n.3 at 2.

⁴¹ Chris Palmer, Dylan Purcell, John Duchneskie, and Julie Shaw, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philly shootings surge as 23 people were shot in a single day*, (*continued*)

Unfortunately, nobody is immune from Philadelphia’s gun violence epidemic, especially not children. In one month in 2019, six of the City’s children were shot, five of them fatally.⁴⁴ Ten-year-old Semaj O’Branty was shot in the head on his way home from school, eleven-month-old Yazeem Jenkins was struck four times while riding in his stepmother’s car, and two-year-old Nikolette Rivera was shot while being held in her mother’s arms in her home—to name only three.⁴⁵ These young victims joined the depressing ranks of the more than 100 children shot in the City last year.⁴⁶ The loss of a child is the grimmest tragedy a family or neighborhood can experience and tests any community’s resolve.

Gun violence is a deadly reality for the people of Pittsburgh as well. Over the past eight years, people have fired 19,747 gunshots in the city.⁴⁷ Pittsburgh has experienced 1,734 non-fatal shootings and 2,048 aggravated assaults with a firearm

<https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia-shooting-gun-violence-increase-spike-4th-july-coronavirus-protests-20200706.html> (last updated July 6, 2020).

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ Oona Goodin-Smith & Anna Orso, *Philly Cops are Used to Tragedy. But 6 Kids Shot in a Month Can Crack Their “Emotional Shell,”* Phila. Inquirer (Nov. 8, 2019, 5:10 AM), <https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia/philadelphia-police-trauma-children-shot-eap-mental-health-suicide-gun-20191108.html>.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Palmer, *supra* n.2.

⁴⁷ Gun Violence, City of Pittsburgh, June 2010 to June 2020, Allegheny County, https://tableau.alleghenycounty.us/t/PublicSite/views/CJ_GunViolence_PGH_8-22-17_v2/Home?:embed=y&:showAppBanner=false&:showShareOptions=true&:display_count=no&:showVizHome=no (last visited July 4, 2020).

since 2010.⁴⁸ The city's gun violence problem feeds a homicide problem. The past decade has seen 541 murders in the city, 86 percent of which involved firearms.⁴⁹ For comparison, Pittsburgh's rate of 17.2 homicides per 100,000 residents from 2010 through 2017 was just under Philadelphia's 18.7-per-100,000 rate during the same period.⁵⁰ Tragically, gun homicide in Pittsburgh is now famous the world over. In 2018, 11 of that year's 52 homicide victims were congregants at the Tree of Life Synagogue.⁵¹

But such tragedies are avoidable. Ordinances like those Respondents seek to invalidate address important causes of gun violence. Harrisburg's lost-and-stolen ordinance, for example, combats crimes involving trafficked and stolen guns. Nationwide, approximately 380,000 guns are stolen from individual owners each year,⁵² and among stolen guns police recovered between 2010 and 2016, most were recovered in connection with crimes, including over 1,500 violent crimes such as

⁴⁸ Pittsburgh Gun Violence 2010-2020, *supra* n. 47.

⁴⁹ Homicides in the City of Pittsburgh, 2010 Through May 2020, Allegheny County, https://tableau.alleghenycounty.us/t/PublicSite/views/CJ_Homicides_PGH_8-22-17_v2/Home?:embed=y&:showAppBanner=false&:showShareOptions=true&:display_count=no&:showVizHome=no (last visited July 4, 2020).

⁵⁰ Homicides in Pittsburgh 2010-2020, *supra* n. 49.

⁵¹ Homicides in Pittsburgh, 2018, Allegheny County, https://tableau.alleghenycounty.us/t/PublicSite/views/CJ_Homicides_PGH_8-22-17_v2/Home?%3Aembed=y%3AshowAppBanner=false%3AshowShareOptions=true%3Adisplay_count=no%3AshowVizHome=no (last visited July 4, 2020); Lois Beckett, Mike Elk, and Martin Pengelly, *Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting: Suspect Robert Bowers Charged with 11 Counts of Murder*, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/27/pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting> (Oct. 18, 2018).

⁵² David Hemenway et al., *Whose Guns are Stolen? The Epidemiology of Gun Theft Victims*, 4 *Injury Epidemiology*, 1 (2017).

murder and armed robbery.⁵³ Harrisburg’s minor possession ordinance likewise addresses another root cause of gun violence. The link between firearm availability and suicide is strongest in adolescents and young adults.⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly then, state laws raising the minimum legal age to buy guns to 21 years are associated with a nine percent decrease in firearm suicides among 18-to-20-year-olds.⁵⁵ And controlling for other factors, unintentional firearm deaths and firearm suicides among youth fell after enactment of a federal minimum age law.⁵⁶ Similarly, Harrisburg’s ban on guns in city parks rests on the basic premise that public firearms threaten public safety. That is why every state in the country maintains location-based gun laws, especially on public property.⁵⁷

Unless the courts are prepared to take ownership of this problem, respect for home rule municipalities’ authority and for the limited preemption adopted by the

⁵³ Brian Freskos, *Missing Pieces: Gun Theft from Legal Gun Owners is on the Rise, Quietly Fueling Violent Crime*, The Trace (Nov. 20, 2017), <https://bit.ly/2izST1h>.

⁵⁴ See Johanna Birckmayer and David Hemenway, *Suicide and Firearm Prevalence: are Youth Disproportionately Affected?*, SUICIDE AND LIFE-THREATENING BEHAVIOR 31, no. 3 (2001); Matthew Miller and David Hemenway, *The Relationship between Firearms and Suicide: a Review of the Literature*, AGGRESSION AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOR 4, no. 1 (1999).

⁵⁵ Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, April M. Zeoli, and Jennifer A. Manganello, *Association Between Youth-focused Firearm Laws and Youth Suicides*, JAMA 292, no. 5 (2004).

⁵⁶ Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, April M. Zeoli, and Jennifer A. Manganello, *Association Between Youth-focused Firearm Laws and Youth Suicides*, JAMA 292, no. 5 (2004).

⁵⁷ *Location Restrictions*, Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/location-restrictions/> (last visited July 4, 2020).

General Assembly requires strict adherence to well-established limitations on standing that foreclose the types of claims Respondents seeks to advance here.

CONCLUSION

Respondents have not stated facts sufficient for standing. Instead they ask the Court to reshape Pennsylvania standing law, releasing a flood of litigants into courts all over the Commonwealth who lack a concrete interest in lawsuits beyond basic opposition to certain municipal regulations. The Court should reject Respondents' request and reverse the decision below.

Respectfully submitted,

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RULE 2135(d) CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE

This brief contains 6,857 words, and therefore complies with the word limits of Pa.R.A.P. 2135 and Pa.R.A.P. 531.

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RULE 127 CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE

I certify that this filing complies with the provisions of the *Case Records Public Access Policy of the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania* that require filing confidential information and documents differently than non-confidential information and documents. *See* Pa.R.A.P. 127(a).

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**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA
MIDDLE DISTRICT**

CITY OF HARRISBURG, MAYOR	:	
ERIC PAPENFUSE, POLICE CHIEF	:	No. 29 MAP 2020
THOMAS CARTER	:	
	:	
Petitioners,	:	
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
FIREARM OWNERS AGAINST	:	
CRIME, KIM STOLFER, JOSHUA	:	
FIRST, AND HOWARD BULLOCK	:	
	:	
Respondents.	:	

Appeal from the Order of the Commonwealth Court, entered September 12, 2019, at No. 1434 C.D. 2018, reversing the judgment of the Court of Common Pleas of Dauphin County, entered on October 9, 2018 at 2015-CV-354. Reargument denied on October 23, 2019.

**REPRODUCED RECORD ACCOMPANYING BRIEF OF AMICI CURIAE
CITIES OF PHILADELPHIA AND PITTSBURGH IN SUPPORT OF
PETITIONERS**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Firearm Owners Against Crime v. City of Harrisburg,

No. 1434 C.D. 2018 (Pa. Commonw. Ct., Sept. 12, 2019).....ii.

IN THE COMMONWEALTH COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Firearm Owners Against Crime;	:	
Kim Stolfer; Joshua First; and	:	
Howard Bullock,	:	
Appellants	:	
	:	
v.	:	No. 1434 C.D. 2018
	:	Argued: April 10, 2019
City of Harrisburg	:	
Mayor Eric Papenfuse; and	:	
Police Chief Thomas Carter	:	

**BEFORE: HONORABLE MARY HANNAH LEAVITT, President Judge
HONORABLE RENÉE COHN JUBELIRER, Judge
HONORABLE ROBERT SIMPSON, Judge¹
HONORABLE P. KEVIN BROBSON, Judge
HONORABLE PATRICIA A. McCULLOUGH, Judge
HONORABLE CHRISTINE FIZZANO CANNON, Judge
HONORABLE ELLEN CEISLER, Judge**

OPINION BY JUDGE BROBSON FILED: September 12, 2019

In this appeal from two orders of the Court of Common Pleas of Dauphin County (trial court), we consider two issues. First, we must determine whether any one or more of the named Appellants, plaintiffs below, have standing to challenge the legality of five local ordinances of the City of Harrisburg (City) through a declaratory judgment action. If so, we next must address whether the named individual defendants, Mayor Eric Papenfuse (Mayor Papenfuse) and Police Chief Thomas Carter (Chief Carter), could, by way of preliminary objection, raise the affirmative defense of official immunity.

¹ This matter was assigned to the opinion writer before September 1, 2019, when Judge Simpson assumed the status of senior judge.

I. BACKGROUND

Appellants are Firearm Owners Against Crime (FOAC), Kim Stolfer (Stolfer), Joshua First (First), and Howard Bullock (Bullock) (collectively, Appellants). Appellants filed a complaint on January 16, 2015 (Complaint), seeking declaratory and injunctive relief with respect to the legality of five sections within the Codified Ordinances of Harrisburg (Code). Through 29 separate counts, 473 paragraphs, and 87 pages, Appellants claim that the challenged ordinances unconstitutionally infringe on rights conferred by the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution² and Article I, Section 21 of the Pennsylvania Constitution³ and are preempted by the Pennsylvania Uniform Firearms Act of 1995.⁴

Each of the challenged ordinance sections, or parts thereof, regulate in some fashion the use, possession, ownership, and/or transfer of firearms within the City. Code Section 3-345.1 generally makes it unlawful for unaccompanied minors to possess firearms in the City (Minors Ordinance).⁵ Code Section 3-345.2 restricts the discharge of firearms within the City to educational facilities accredited by the

² The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution provides: “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

³ Article I, Section 21 of the Pennsylvania Constitution provides: “The right of the citizens to bear arms in defense of themselves and the State shall not be questioned.”

⁴ 18 Pa. C.S. §§ 6101-6128 (Act).

⁵ The Minors Ordinance provides:

It shall be unlawful for any minor under the age of 18 years to have in his or her possession, except in his or her place of residence, any firearm, flobert rifle, air gun, spring gun or any implement which impels with force a metal pellet of any kind, unless said minor is accompanied by an adult.

Code § 3-345.1.

Pennsylvania Department of Education and approved by either the Mayor or the Chief of Police or a firing range operation by the Harrisburg Bureau of Police (Discharge Ordinance).⁶ Code Section 3.345.4 requires firearms owners to report lost or stolen firearms to law enforcement within 48 hours after discovery of the loss or theft (Lost/Stolen Ordinance).⁷ Code Section 3-355.2 prohibits the sale or transfer of firearms and ammunition during the period of emergency declaration by the Mayor and further authorizes the Mayor to prohibit the public possession of firearms during such a state of emergency (State of Emergency Ordinance).⁸ Finally, Code

⁶ The Discharge Ordinance provides:

No person shall fire any cannon, gun, rifle, pistol, toy pistol, or firearms of any kind within the City, except at supervised firing ranges in bona fide educational institutions accredited by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and with the approval of the Mayor or Chief of Police, or at a firing range operated by the Bureau of Police.

Code § 3-345.2.

⁷ The Lost/Stolen Ordinance provides:

- A. Any person who is the owner of a firearm that is lost or stolen shall report the loss or theft of that firearm to an appropriate local law enforcement official within 48 hours after discovery of the loss or theft[.]
- B. For the purpose of this section, the term “firearm” shall be defined as any pistol or revolver with a barrel length less than 15 inches, any shotgun with a barrel length less than 18 inches or any rifle with a barrel length less than 16 inches, or any pistol, revolver, rifle or shotgun with an overall length of less than 26 inches. The barrel length of a firearm shall be determined by measuring from the muzzle of the barrel to the face of the closed action, bolt, or cylinder, whichever is applicable.

Code § 3-345.4.

⁸ The State of Emergency Ordinance provides, in relevant part:

- A. Whenever the Mayor declares that a state of emergency exists, the following emergency prohibitions shall thereupon be in effect during the period of said emergency and throughout the City:

Section 10-301.13, *inter alia*, prohibits the possession, use, and discharge of firearms within City parks (Park Ordinance).⁹

-
- (1) The sale or transfer of possession, with or without consideration, the offering to sell or so transfer and the purchase of any ammunition, guns or other firearms of any size or description.
 - (2) The displaying by or in any store or shop of any ammunition, guns or other firearms of any size or description.
 - (3) The possession in a public place of a rifle or shotgun by a person, except a duly authorized law enforcement officer or person in military service acting in an official performance of his or her duty.
- B. The Mayor may order and promulgate all or any of the following emergency measures, in whole or in part, with such limitations and conditions as he or she may determine appropriate; any such emergency measures so ordered and promulgated shall thereupon be in effect during the period of said emergency and in the area or areas for which the emergency has been declared:
-
- (8) The prohibition of the possession in a public place or park of weapons, including but not limited to firearms, bows and arrows, air rifles, slingshots, knives, razors, blackjacks, billy clubs, or missiles of any kind.

Code § 3-355.2. Although Appellants generally seek relief with respect to the entirety of the State of Emergency Ordinance, including all of subsection (B), we have reproduced only that portion of subsection (B) that relates specifically to firearms, consistent with Appellants' underlying legal theories.

⁹ The Park Ordinance provides:

- A. No person shall hunt, trap or pursue wildlife in any park at any time, except in connection with bona fide recreational activities and with the approval of the Director by general or special order or rules or regulations.
- B. No person shall use, carry or possess firearms of any description, or air rifles, spring guns, bow and arrows, slings or any other form of weapons potentially inimical to wildlife and dangerous to human safety, or any instrument that can be loaded with and fire blank cartridges, or any kind of trapping device in any park.
- C. No person shall shoot or propel any object from any of the foregoing into park areas from beyond park boundaries or while in a park.
- D. No person shall fish in Italian Lake.

The violation of any of these ordinances could lead to the issuance of a citation and summary criminal proceedings. If cited and convicted, the violator faces a fine of not less than \$50 nor more than \$1000 per violation, the forfeiture of personal property, and/or imprisonment for not more than 90 days for each violation. Code §§ 1-301.99, 3-345.99, 3-355.99, 3-399, 10-301.99. Because the Code provides for imprisonment upon violation of any of these ordinances, any proceeding to enforce these ordinances will be a criminal proceeding subject to the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure. *See Town of McCandless v. Bellisario*, 709 A.2d 379, 380-81 (Pa. 1998).

The named defendants, Mayor Papenfuse, Chief Carter, and the City (collectively, the City Defendants), initially removed the action from the trial court to the United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania (district court). Thereafter, the City Defendants filed a motion to dismiss the Complaint for, *inter alia*, lack of standing under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). The district court, by the Honorable Yvette Kane, granted the motion and dismissed the Complaint, concluding that the district court lacked subject matter jurisdiction over the suit because Appellants lacked standing under federal law¹⁰ to challenge the ordinances. *Firearms Owners Against Crime v. City of Harrisburg*, (M.D. Pa., No. 1:15-cv-0322, filed March 24, 2016, 2016 WL 1162283). Before remanding the matter to the trial court, the district court afforded Appellants an opportunity to amend their Complaint as to certain counts, but Appellants did not avail themselves of that opportunity. Thereafter, the district court remanded the case to the trial court

Code § 10-301.13 (footnote omitted).

¹⁰ We are not bound by the district court's standing determination, as Pennsylvania courts are "not bound to adhere to the federal definition of standing." *In re Hickson*, 821 A.2d 1238, 1243 n.5 (Pa. 2003).

in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1447(c) (requiring remand where district court determines it lacks subject matter jurisdiction over removed action).

Upon remand to the trial court, the City Defendants filed preliminary objections, accompanied by a notice to plead (Preliminary Objections). In their first preliminary objection, the City Defendants sought dismissal of the Complaint for lack of standing under Pennsylvania Rule of Civil Procedure No. 1028(a)(4) (legal insufficiency, or demurrer) or (a)(5) (lack of capacity to sue). In their second preliminary objection, the City Defendants sought dismissal of Appellants' constitutional challenges for failure to state a claim (demurrer), contending that the ordinances do not unconstitutionally infringe on the right to bear arms under the United States or Pennsylvania Constitutions. In their third preliminary objection, the City Defendants sought dismissal of Appellants' preemption challenges for failure to state a claim (demurrer). In their final preliminary objection, the City Defendants sought dismissal of all claims against Mayor Papenfuse and Chief Carter as individuals, arguing, *inter alia*, that both are immune from suit as high public officials.

In response, Appellants filed a single preliminary objection, contending that the City Defendants improperly raised the affirmative defense of official immunity by preliminary objection rather than through an answer to the Complaint under the heading "New Matter," as required by Pennsylvania Rule of Civil Procedure No. 1030. As relief, Appellants asked the trial court to strike paragraph 48 from the City Defendants' Preliminary Objections. By Order dated January 4, 2018, the trial court overruled Appellants' preliminary objection. In doing so, the trial court held that because the City Defendants argued that the immunity defense was clearly applicable on the face of the Complaint, the City Defendants could raise the

defense by preliminary objection. The trial court ordered Appellants to answer the City Defendants' Preliminary Objections, which Appellants did on January 23, 2018.

By subsequent Order dated October 9, 2018, the trial court sustained the City Defendants' preliminary objection in the nature of a demurrer and dismissed the Complaint, finding that Appellants failed to plead sufficient facts to establish standing to sue. In an accompanying Memorandum Opinion, the trial court reasoned:

Plaintiffs have not pled any facts to show that they were harmed by any of the subject Ordinances. Plaintiffs do not allege that they have ever been cited or personally threatened with citation under any of the Ordinances. Rather, Plaintiffs assert potential harm that is entirely speculative, as it is based on events that may never occur. This is an improper use of the Declaratory Judgments [Act].^[11] As such, Plaintiffs have failed to allege facts sufficient to establish standing, and this Complaint should be dismissed.

(Trial Court Mem. Op. at 4 (citation omitted).)

II. DISCUSSION

On appeal to this Court, Appellants argue that the trial court erred in both its January 4, 2018 Order, overruling Appellants' preliminary objection to the City Defendants' Preliminary Objections, and its October 9, 2018 Order, dismissing the Complaint for lack of standing. We review a common pleas court's decision sustaining preliminary objections and dismissing a complaint for an abuse of discretion or error of law. *Brown v. Wetzel*, 179 A.3d 1161, 1164 n.2 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2018). Preliminary objections in the nature of a demurrer should only be sustained if the law says with certainty that no recovery is possible. *Foster v.*

¹¹ 42 Pa. C.S. §§ 7531-7541.

Peat Marwick Main & Co., 587 A.2d 382, 384 (Pa. Cmwlth. 1991), *aff'd sub nom. Foster v. Mut. Fire, Marine & Inland Ins. Co.*, 676 A.2d 652 (Pa. 1996). Where a preliminary objection presents a question of law, our standard of review is *de novo* and our scope of review is plenary. *Russo v. Allegheny Cty.*, 125 A.3d 113, 116 n.5 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2015), *aff'd*, 150 a.3d 16 (Pa. 2016); *see Office of Governor v. Donahue*, 98 A.3d 1223, 1228 (Pa. 2014) (“The issue of standing is a question of law; thus, our standard of review is *de novo* and our scope of review is plenary.”).

A. Standing

We begin by addressing the question of standing. The general rule is that a party seeking redress from the courts must establish standing to bring and maintain the action. *Pittsburgh Palisades Park, LLC v. Cmwlth.*, 888 A.2d 655, 659 (Pa. 2005). In Pennsylvania, this standing doctrine “is a prudential, judicially[]created tool meant to winnow out those matters in which the litigants have no direct interest.” *In re Hickson*, 821 A.2d at 1243. “The purpose of . . . standing is to protect against improper plaintiffs.” *In re Application of Biester*, 409 A.2d 848, 851 (Pa. 1979).

As part of our standing analysis in this case, we also recognize the remedial nature of the Declaratory Judgments Act, as it provides: “This subchapter is declared to be remedial. Its purpose is to settle and to *afford relief from uncertainty and insecurity* with respect to rights, status, and other legal relations, *and is to be liberally construed and administered.*” 42 Pa. C.S. § 7541(a) (emphasis added). We further note that the General Assembly expressly abolished the principle that declaratory judgment actions must give way to other existing avenues of relief:

The General Assembly finds and determines that the principle rendering declaratory relief unavailable in circumstances where an action at law or in equity or a special statutory remedy is available has unreasonably

limited the availability of declaratory relief and such principle is hereby abolished. The availability of declaratory relief shall not be limited by the provisions of 1 Pa. C.S. § 1504 (relating to statutory remedy preferred over common law) and the remedy provided by this subchapter shall be additional and cumulative to all other available remedies except as provided in subsection (c). Where another remedy is available the election of the declaratory judgment remedy rather than another available remedy shall not affect the substantive rights of the parties, and the court may pursuant to general rules change venue, require additional pleadings, fix the order of discovery and proof, and take such other action as may be required in the interest of justice.

Id. § 7541(b).

Here, Appellants assert standing to challenge the ordinances under a traditional standing analysis and as taxpayers. In their brief on appeal, the City Defendants also contend that FOAC lacks the legal capacity to bring this action, based on its status as a political action committee, or PAC.

1. Traditional Standing

Under a traditional standing analysis, the individual initiating the legal action must show that he is aggrieved by the matter that he seeks to challenge. *Pittsburgh Palisades*, 888 A.2d at 659-60. To be aggrieved, the party must have a substantial, direct, and immediate interest in the outcome of the litigation:

A substantial interest in the outcome of litigation is one that surpasses the common interest of all citizens in procuring obedience to the law. A direct interest requires a causal connection between the asserted violation and the harm complained of. An interest is immediate when the causal connection is not remote or speculative.

Phantom Fireworks Showrooms, LLC v. Wolf, 198 A.3d 1205, 1215 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2018) (en banc) (citations omitted).

We will analyze first the standing of First, Bullock, and Stolfer (collectively, Individual Plaintiffs).¹² The Individual Plaintiffs are named plaintiffs only with respect to the legal challenges to the Discharge, Lost/Stolen, State of Emergency, and Park Ordinances. First is an adult resident of the City. He lawfully possesses firearms under state and federal law. He is a member of FOAC. As a gun owner and City resident, First fears prosecution under the ordinances, particularly because the City has indicated that it has enforced and will continue to enforce the ordinances. Bullock is not a resident of the City. He does, however, commute daily to Harrisburg for work. Like First, he lawfully possesses firearms under state and federal law and is a member of FOAC. He, too, fears prosecution under the ordinances. Stolfer is a member and the President of FOAC. He lawfully possesses firearms under state and federal law. Although he does not reside in the City, he regularly travels “on an average bi-weekly basis” to the City for political activities, both as the President of FOAC and in his individual capacity. Like First and Bullock, Stolfer fears prosecution under the ordinances. In addition to the foregoing, the Individual Plaintiffs each own, possess, use, and bear firearms for purposes of self-defense, hunting, firearms training and education, and target shooting. They are licensed to carry concealed firearms throughout the Commonwealth.

The City enacted, enforced, and continues to enforce the challenged ordinances. Indeed, both Mayor Papenfuse and Chief Carter have, through the media, publicly expressed their support for the ordinances and ongoing enforcement thereof. Appellants observe that any violation of the challenged ordinances could

¹² For purposes of our analysis, because the trial court sustained the City Defendants’ standing challenge as a demurrer, we accept as true all well-pleaded allegations of material fact contained in the Complaint, as well as any reasonable inferences therefrom. *Pa. Indep. Oil & Gas Ass’n v. Cmwlth.*, 135 A.3d 1118, 1123 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2015) (en banc).

lead to the filing of criminal charges, prosecution, and penalties. The current, actual, and threatened enforcement of the challenged ordinances has a chilling effect on the Individual Plaintiffs' rights to engage in constitutionally protected activities with respect to firearms. Indeed, the Individual Plaintiffs fear criminal prosecution under the challenged ordinances if they choose to engage in what they view as their constitutionally protected right to bear arms, concealed or open.¹³

Relying on the above factual averments, Appellants contend that the Individual Plaintiffs satisfy the traditional standing test. Appellants also argue that because they are challenging the validity of an ordinance, the law does not require them to trigger enforcement before bringing the challenge. In response, the City Defendants largely focus on the third test for traditional standing—*i.e.*, that the asserted interest be “immediate,” not “remote or speculative.” The City Defendants note first that the challenged ordinances are not new. According to the City Defendants,¹⁴ the Discharge Ordinance dates back to 1821. The City passed the Park Ordinance in 1905, the Minors Ordinance in 1951, the State of Emergency

¹³ With respect to First's standing and Appellants' argument in support of taxpayer standing, Appellants rely on additional factual claims in their brief on appeal not included in their Complaint. Specifically, Appellants claim that First “lived through the states of emergency declared in Harrisburg in 2011 and 2016.” (Appellants' Br. at 16.) Appellants also allege that the City must satisfy a \$250,000 deductible before insurance will cover its litigation costs with respect to defending the challenged ordinances. (*Id.* at 21.) As we are here reviewing the propriety of the trial court's grant of a demurrer for lack of standing, we will not consider these additional allegations of fact. Instead, we confine our analysis to the averments in the Complaint.

¹⁴ City Defendants filed a supplemental reproduced record, which the City Defendants contend support the legislative history that they recount in their brief on appeal. As we do not find the legislative history dispositive, we have not endeavored to verify the above dates. Instead, we simply accept them solely for purposes of setting forth City Defendants' argument on appeal.

Ordinance in 1969,¹⁵ and the Lost/Stolen Ordinance in 2009. Given the age of these ordinances and the fact that not one of the Individual Plaintiffs has been cited or threatened with citation under any of them, the City Defendants contend that the Individual Plaintiffs' fear of prosecution is pure speculation.

Further, citing this Court's decisions in *National Rifle Association v. City of Philadelphia*, 977 A.2d 78 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2009) (en banc), *appeal denied*, 996 A.2d 1069 (Pa. 2010) (*NRA/Philadelphia*), and *National Rifle Association v. City of Pittsburgh*, 999 A.2d 1256 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2010), *appeal denied*, 23 A.3d 543 (Pa. 2011) (*NRA/Pittsburgh*), the City Defendants argue that in order to have standing to challenge the ordinances, the Individual Plaintiffs must allege that they have actually violated the ordinances and/or have been prosecuted for doing so. Because the Individual Plaintiffs do not include such allegations in their Complaint, the City Defendants contend that they lack standing to challenge the ordinances. With respect to the Minors Ordinance, the City Defendants note that not a single named plaintiff is a minor, nor do Appellants plead that any minor has been cited under the ordinance or will violate the ordinance and be cited. With respect to the State of Emergency Ordinance, the City Defendants argue that Appellants needed to plead that the ordinance is going to actually be triggered in the near future—*i.e.*, the Appellants needed to plead a prediction of “widespread civil unrest.” (City Defendants' Br. at 10.) Moreover, Appellants do not plead that there ever has been

¹⁵ The purported passage of the State of Emergency Ordinance in 1969 appears to coincide with a bloody and violent period of civil unrest in our nation's history. In the immediately preceding year, civil rights icon and Nobel Peace Laureate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and presidential candidate Senator Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated. A wave of urban riots followed, fueled by a deep sense of fear and despair over racial and economic injustice as well as calls to end the United States' military involvement in the Vietnam War.

an emergency that triggered the gun restrictions set forth in the State of Emergency Ordinance.¹⁶

In reply, Appellants advocate a relaxed traditional standing inquiry, given that they are pursuing relief under the Declaratory Judgments Act. Whether under this relaxed inquiry or a traditional standing inquiry, however, Appellants argue that they have averred sufficient facts to proceed with their challenges. Moreover, citing, *inter alia*, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's decision in *Arsenal Coal Co. v. Department of Environmental Resources*, 477 A.2d 1333 (Pa. 1984), Appellants argue that their avenues to challenge the validity of the ordinances should not be limited to summary criminal enforcement proceedings. Rather, Appellants seek pre-enforcement review under the Declaratory Judgments Act.

As noted above, standing is a tool to protect against improper plaintiffs. An improper plaintiff is one "who is not adversely affected *in any way* by the matter he seeks to challenge." *Wm. Penn Parking Garage, Inc. v. City of Pittsburgh*, 346 A.2d 269, 280 (Pa. 1975) (emphasis added). With respect to the Discharge Ordinance and Park Ordinance, based on the allegations set forth in the Complaint, we find that the Individual Plaintiffs each have a substantial interest in the legality of these ordinances. Each is a lawful gun owner who lives in, works in, or regularly visits the City. Accordingly, these challenged ordinances restrict, to varying degrees, the Individual Plaintiffs' lawful use/possession of their firearms while in

¹⁶ At various points in their brief in opposition, the City Defendants argue that various state laws or court decisions cut against Appellants' legal challenges to the ordinances. In essence, the City Defendants contend that because Appellants cannot prevail on the merits, they do not have standing. The question of standing, however, does not focus on the legal merits of the asserted claims. Whether Appellants may ultimately prevail on their legal challenges to the ordinances is not a question that is presently before us.

the City. The Individual Plaintiffs, therefore, have an interest in the legality of these ordinances that surpasses the common interest of all citizens.

The Individual Plaintiffs' interest is direct, because there is a causal connection between the Individual Plaintiffs' possession and use of firearms and the City's decision to restrict that activity through the passage and enforcement of these ordinances. Finally, the interest is immediate because the Individual Plaintiffs cannot now discharge a firearm within much of the City without violating the Discharge Ordinance, nor can they now carry or discharge a firearm within a City park without violating the Park Ordinance. Moreover, according to the allegations in the Complaint, the City is actively enforcing these ordinances and has so advised the public through the media. The Individual Plaintiffs are proper plaintiffs to challenge the legality of those ordinances because they are currently adversely affected by the existence and enforcement of the Discharge Ordinance and Park Ordinance. FOAC, concomitantly, has standing to challenge these ordinances. *See Robinson Twp., Washington Cty. v. Cmwlth.*, 83 A.3d 901, 922 (Pa. 2013) ("Under Pennsylvania law, an association has standing as representative of its members to bring a cause of action even in the absence of injury to itself, if the association alleges that at least one of its members is suffering immediate or threatened injury as a result of the action challenged."); *Americans for Fair Treatment, Inc. v. Phila. Fed'n of Teachers*, 150 A.3d 528, 533 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2016).

We reach the same conclusion with respect to the Lost/Stolen Ordinance. The Lost/Stolen Ordinance imposes an obligation on the Individual Plaintiffs, as lawful gun owners who live in, work in, or regularly visit the City, to report a lost/stolen firearm to local law enforcement within 48 hours of the loss or theft. The Individual Plaintiffs have an interest in the legality of the Lost/Stolen

Ordinance that surpasses the common interest of all citizens, because the Individual Plaintiffs fall within the class of individuals on whom the ordinance imposes a duty to report.¹⁷

The Individual Plaintiffs' interest is direct, because there is a causal connection between the Individual Plaintiffs' possession and use of firearms and the City's decision to impose an affirmative reporting obligation on those who chose to do so should they lose their firearm or have their firearm stolen. Finally, the interest is immediate. Although the reporting obligation is triggered only in the event a firearm is lost or stolen, the reporting obligation nonetheless exists now. The relatively recent passage of the ordinance itself in 2009 serves, at some level, as an acknowledgment by Harrisburg City Council that the loss or theft of firearms is an existing threat to public safety, justifying local legislative action. In the event of a lost or stolen firearm, the Individual Plaintiffs will have only 48 hours to comply. The harm that the Individual Plaintiffs wish to abate is the affirmative obligation to report lost/stolen firearms to local government officials as a result of their decision to own and carry firearms in the City. It is not speculative. It is not remote. Because the Individual Plaintiffs are presently adversely affected by the existence and enforcement of the Lost/Stolen Ordinance, they, and by extension FOAC, are proper plaintiffs to challenge the legality of that ordinance.

Finally, we must determine whether the Individual Plaintiffs have standing, under traditional standing principles, to challenge the State of Emergency Ordinance. Our analysis of the challenge to this ordinance yields a different result.

¹⁷ Although Appellants suggest that the challenged ordinances can be enforced beyond the geographic boundaries of the City, they provide no legal citation that a third-class city, such as the City, has the authority, under its general police power or otherwise, to enact an ordinance of statewide application. Nor do they allege that the City's current or past enforcement of the ordinances extends beyond the city limits.

Unlike the other three ordinances discussed above, the State of Emergency Ordinance does not currently impose any duty on the Individual Plaintiffs or any restriction on their ability to use or possess firearms within the City. Its operative provisions only become effective if/when the Mayor declares a state of emergency, which the ordinance limits to the following extreme circumstance:

Whenever the Mayor determines *there has been an act of violence or a flagrant and substantial defiance of or resistance to a lawful exercise of public authority* and that, therefore, *there is reason to believe that there exists a clear and present danger* of a riot, civil disorder or other general public disorder, widespread disobedience of the law and substantial injury to persons or property, all of which constitute a threat to public peace or order and to the general welfare of the City or a part or parts thereof, he or she may declare that a state of emergency exists within the City or any part or parts thereof.

Code § 3-355.1 (emphasis added).¹⁸ While, for reasons set forth above, the Individual Plaintiffs' status as current lawful gun owners evidences an interest in the

¹⁸ In their brief on appeal, Appellants contend, with embedded links to news articles published on www.pennlive.com, that Mayor Linda Thompson, on September 7, 2011, and Mayor Papenfuse, on January 23, 2016, declared states of emergency that triggered the State of Emergency Ordinance. (Appellants' Br. at 58-59.) As a resident of the City, First lived through those declarations. Citing these two instances, Appellants suggest that because First's rights were previously curtailed under the State of Emergency Ordinance, we should hold that they now have, or at least First now has, standing to challenge the ordinance. Even if we were to consider these allegations about past states of emergency in the City, which appear for the first time in Appellants' answer to City Defendants' Preliminary Objections (R.R. 194a), as if set forth in Complaint, they do not alter our reasoning or conclusion above. As the City Defendants note in their response brief (City Defendants' Br. at 11), again with embedded links to the relevant news articles, not all emergency declarations are alike. Mayor Thompson declared a state of emergency in 2011 in anticipation of the Susquehanna River rising above flood stage and flooding the City. Mayor Papenfuse declared a disaster emergency after 14 to 16 inches of snow fell overnight in the City, allowing the City to tap additional resources, like equipment and personnel, to combat the severe weather. The mayors issued these declarations in response to acts of God, not "an act of violence or a flagrant and substantial defiance of or resistance to a lawful exercise of public authority." Code § 3-355.1.A. In short, Appellants fail to allege anything in their Complaint, their answer to

legality of the State of Emergency Ordinance, at least as it affects firearm ownership, that surpasses that of the general public, Appellants fail to allege any facts in their Complaint under which we can conclude that this particular ordinance directly and immediately affects, regulates, or impairs the Individual Plaintiffs' possession, use, or enjoyment of their firearms. *See Gulnac by Gulnac v. S. Butler Cty. Sch. Dist.*, 587 A.2d 699, 701 (Pa. 1991) (“A declaratory judgment must not be employed to determine rights in anticipation of events which may never occur or for consideration of moot cases or as a medium for the rendition of an advisory opinion which may prove to be purely academic.”). For that reason, we agree with the trial court that the Individual Plaintiffs and FOAC lack standing to challenge the legality of the State of Emergency Ordinance.

The only named plaintiff with respect to the challenges to the Minor Ordinance is FOAC. According to the Complaint, FOAC is a statewide, nonpartisan political action committee and membership organization. It boasts 1,649 members. FOAC's mission is to defend, preserve, and protect constitutional and statutory rights to firearm ownership. FOAC was formed in 1993 but became a statewide political action committee in 1994. FOAC's membership includes those who lawfully possess firearms throughout the Commonwealth, including Dauphin County. With respect to the Minors Ordinance specifically, FOAC currently has members under the age of 18, one of whom lives in the City and is subject to the ordinance.

the Preliminary Objections, or their briefs on appeal that would cause us to believe that Individual Plaintiffs' rights as lawful gun owners have ever been impacted or are likely to be impacted by the State of Emergency Ordinance, which, as noted above, is only triggered in extreme, hopefully rare, circumstances and specifically only in response to acts of violence or defiance of the law (not floods and snow storms).

In their brief, the City Defendants acknowledge the allegation in the Complaint that FOAC has a current member under the age of 18 who resides in the City. The City Defendants suggest, however, that the member may no longer be 18 and that FOAC should be required to show the current age of the member. In addition, the City Defendants argue that there is no allegation in the Complaint that the minor member of FOAC has been cited under the ordinance or will violate the ordinance and be cited in the future. In the absence of such allegations, the City Defendants agree that there can be no standing.

An association seeking standing is not required to disclose the identity of its affected member, but it must describe the affected member in sufficient detail to show that the member is aggrieved. *Americans for Fair Treatment, Inc.*, 150 A.3 at 534-35. FOAC alleges that it has at least one member who is under the age of 18 living in the City impacted directly by the ordinance's prohibition against unaccompanied minors possessing firearms. This member falls within the class of persons regulated by the Minors Ordinance and thus has an interest that surpasses that of the general public. The ordinance has a direct and immediate effect on the member, because the ordinance prohibits the member from possessing a firearm within the City unaccompanied by an adult. We, therefore, conclude, based on the allegations in the Complaint, that FOAC has associational standing to challenge the legality of the Minors Ordinance.

The City Defendants argue that FOAC lacks the capacity to bring this lawsuit. As a PAC, the City Defendants contend that FOAC is only authorized to spend funds on election-related expenses. Given that this lawsuit is not

election-related, the City Defendants argue that FOAC may not be a plaintiff.¹⁹ With respect to FOAC, Appellants contend that the City Defendants fail to adequately develop their lack of capacity to sue argument, and, therefore, we should deem it waived. *See In re Tax Claim Bureau of Lehigh Cty. 2012 Judicial Tax Sale*, 107 A.3d 853, 857 n.5 (Pa. Cmwlth.) (“A party’s failure to develop an issue in the argument section of its brief constitutes waiver of the issue.”), *appeal denied*, 117 A.3d 299 (Pa. 2015).

The City Defendants’ argument requires this Court to assume facts beyond those set forth in the Complaint or, for that matter, the City Defendants’ Preliminary Objections.²⁰ Specifically, there is no allegation in the Complaint or the City Defendants’ Preliminary Objections that FOAC is spending any money to support this litigation. Even if we assume that an Election Code violation justifies dismissal of a plaintiff for lack of capacity to sue, which the City Defendants suggest in only a cursory manner, we cannot necessarily conclude that FOAC is funding this litigation, lawfully or unlawfully, simply because it is one of several named plaintiffs. Moreover, we note that, in addition to identifying itself as a PAC, FOAC identifies itself as a “membership organization with 1,649 members.” (Complaint ¶ 3.) Accordingly, based on what is, and is not, alleged in the Complaint and the

¹⁹ In support for this proposition, the City Defendants cite to Section 1634.1 of the Election Code (Election Code), Act of June 3, 1937, P.L. 1333, *as amended*, added by the Act of November 26, 1978, P.L. 1313, 25 P.S. § 3254.1, which provides: “No candidate, chairman or treasurer of any political committee shall make or agree to make any expenditure or incur any liability except as provided in [S]ection 1621(d) [of the Election Code, added by the Act of October 4, 1978, P.L. 893, 25 P.S. § 3241].”

²⁰ *See* Pa. R.C.P. No. 1028(a)(5) note (noting that lack of capacity to sue preliminary objection cannot be determined from facts of record and must, therefore, be endorsed with a notice to plead).

Preliminary Objections, we reject the City Defendants' alternative lack of capacity to sue argument directed at FOAC.

We recognize that our decision here, affording traditional standing to Individual Plaintiffs and FOAC, conflicts with our precedent in *NRA/Pittsburgh* and *NRA/Philadelphia*, wherein this Court held that the plaintiffs in those cases lacked standing to challenge local gun ordinances because they failed to allege in their verified pleadings that they have actually violated the challenged ordinances, that they intend to violate the challenged ordinances, or that they have been prosecuted for violating the challenged ordinances. *See NRA/Pittsburgh*, 999 A.2d at 1258-59; *NRA/Philadelphia*, 977 A.2d at 82. The doctrine of *stare decisis*, however, "is not an inexorable command to be followed blindly when such adherence leads to perpetuating error." *Stilp v. Cmwlth.*, 905 A.2d 918, 967 (Pa. 2006); *see Buckwalter v. Borough of Phoenixville*, 985 A.2d 728, 731 (Pa. 2009).

After we decided *NRA/Pittsburgh*, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court issued its decision in *Robinson Township*. Among the issues the Supreme Court addressed in that case was whether this Court erred in dismissing the challenges of a physician to a state statute that restricted the physician's ability to obtain and share with other physicians information about chemicals used in unconventional drilling operations. We concluded that the physician would not have standing to challenge the statute unless and until (a) he actually requested the confidential information and his request was either denied or his access to the information restricted in such a way to prevent him from providing care to his patients, or (b) he actually possessed the information and wished to disclose it to others in violation of the statute's confidentiality provision. *Robinson Twp.*, 83 A.3d at 923. Otherwise, the

physician's asserted interest was too remote and speculative or, alternatively, not ripe for judicial review.

On appeal, the Supreme Court disagreed with our analysis and reversed, opining:

[The physician] describes the untenable and objectionable position in which [the statute commonly known as] Act 13^[21] places him: choosing between violating a Section 3222.1(b) [of Act 13] confidentiality agreement and violating his legal and ethical obligations to treat a patient by accepted standards, or not taking a case and refusing a patient medical care. The Commonwealth's attempt to redefine [the physician's] interests and minimize the actual harm asserted is unpersuasive. Our existing jurisprudence permits pre-enforcement review of statutory provisions in cases in which petitioners must choose between equally unappealing options and where the third option, here refusing to provide medical services to a patient, is equally undesirable.

In light of [the physician's] unpalatable professional choices in the wake of Act 13, the interest he asserts is substantial and direct. Moreover, [the physician's] interest is not remote. A decision in this matter may well affect whether [the physician], and other medical professionals similarly situated, will accept patients and may affect subsequent medical decisions in treating patients—events which may occur well before the doctor is in a position to request information regarding the chemical composition of fracking fluid from a particular Marcellus Shale industrial operation. Additional factual development that would result from awaiting an actual request for information on behalf of a patient is not likely to shed more light upon the constitutional question of law presented by what is essentially a facial challenge to Section 3222.1(b).

Robinson Twp., 83 A.3d at 924-25 (citations omitted) (citing *Cozen O'Connor v. City of Phila. Bd. of Ethics*, 13 A.3d 464 (Pa. 2011) (holding law firm had standing

²¹ 58 Pa. C.S. §§ 2301-3504.

to pursue declaratory judgment to determine whether it could forgive outstanding debt owed to it by political campaign committee without violating Philadelphia campaign contribution laws); *Shaulis v. Pa. State Ethics Comm'n*, 833 A.2d 123 (Pa. 2003) (holding attorney had standing to pursue judicial review of advisory opinion of Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission to determine whether she was statutorily barred from publishing articles or books on Pennsylvania state taxes during first year after her retirement), *abrogated in part on other grounds by Yocum v. Pa. Gaming Control Bd.*, 161 A.3d 228 (Pa. 2017); *Arsenal Coal*, 477 A.2d 1333 (holding coal company had standing to pursue action to enjoin Department of Environmental Resources from implementing certain regulations)).

Appellants, who believe that the challenged ordinances are facially invalid restrictions on rights afforded them under the United States and Pennsylvania Constitutions, have no real alternative avenue to address their grievance. They can curb their conduct to conform to the ordinances' mandates or they can willfully violate the law and face criminal prosecution. Like the physician in *Robinson Township*, the law firm in *Cozen O'Connor*, the attorney in *Shaulis*, and the coal company in *Arsenal Coal*, Appellants face equally unappealing options. As the dissent in *NRA/Pittsburgh* explained:

This Court's adoption by reference of the trial court's standing analysis in [*NRA/Philadelphia*] and its majority opinion in this case leave law-abiding citizens who fall within the class of those regulated by the allegedly unlawful ordinance with a Hobson's Choice—either comply with a law you believe is unlawful or subject yourself to possible criminal prosecution. We must not presume that the citizens of the Commonwealth will blithely choose to violate a law and risk criminal sanctions for the sole purpose of proving the law's invalidity any more than we should presume that a local government would enact a law, regulation, or ordinance that it has no

intent to enforce. Accordingly, our ruling in [*NRA/Philadelphia*] and the majority opinion in this case create the avoidable risk that facially invalid criminal ordinances could go unchallenged if the burden of noncompliance and risk of prosecution is so great that willful noncompliance for the sole purpose of challenging the law is not an option.

NRA/Pittsburgh, 999 A.2d at 1261 (Brobson, J., dissenting).

Our precedent in *NRA/Pittsburgh* and *NRA/Philadelphia* is untenable and must be overruled because it affords greater access to the courts to challenge the facial constitutionality of ordinances to scofflaws than to law-abiding citizens. It makes little sense to wait for Appellants to break the law, which we presume they do not want to do, before they can challenge it. It also makes little sense to force law-abiding citizens to rely on law breakers to advocate their interests. “Additional factual development that would result from awaiting an actual” criminal proceeding enforcing these ordinances “is not likely to shed more light upon the . . . question of law presented by what is essentially a facial challenge” to the ordinances. *Robinson Twp.*, 83 A.3d at 925.

As explained above, the Minors Ordinance, the Discharge Ordinance, the Lost/Stolen Ordinance, and the Park Ordinance are local criminal ordinances that have a current impact on Appellants’ interests, which are direct and substantial. Those interests are not remote. A decision in this matter will affect the extent to which Appellants may possess and use firearms within this City, as well as whether they have any obligation to comply with a 48-hour reporting requirement. A decision in this case will afford Appellants and the City Defendants “relief from uncertainty and insecurity with respect to rights . . . and other legal relations,” a core and remedial purpose behind the Declaratory Judgments Act. 42 Pa. C.S. § 7541(a).

Pre-enforcement review of these ordinances is, therefore, appropriate, and Appellants are exactly who we would expect to bring such a challenge.

2. *Taxpayer Standing*

Where a plaintiff does not meet the traditional standing test, the circumstances of the challenge may warrant affording the plaintiff standing as a taxpayer. Under this relaxed standard for standing, the plaintiff must show the following: (1) the governmental action in question would otherwise go unchallenged; (2) those who are directly and immediately affected by the action complained of benefit from the action and thus are not inclined to challenge it; (3) judicial relief is appropriate; (4) redress through other channels is unavailable; and (5) no other person is better suited to bring the challenge. *Phantom Fireworks*, 198 A.3d at 1216.²² Even where these five criteria are satisfied, taxpayer standing is only appropriate in cases where the challenged action affects in some way the plaintiff's status *as a taxpayer*. *Americans for Fair Treatment, Inc.*, 150 A.3d at 537

²² In their brief, Appellants cite the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's decision in *Price v. Philadelphia Parking Authority*, 221 A.2d 138 (Pa. 1966), for the proposition that any taxpayer may initiate an action to prevent the unlawful and wrongful expenditure of public funds. Since *Price*, however, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has limited the applicability of taxpayer standing to those circumstances where the above criteria are met:

The once liberal approach granting individuals standing based upon their interest as taxpayers was rejected by our Court in the seminal decision of [*In re*] *Application of Biester*, which reinvigorated the traditional requirements of standing that an individual must establish an interest in an action that surpasses the common interest of all taxpaying citizens. While [*In re Application of*] *Biester* curtailed the concept of standing based solely upon taxpayer status, it also recognized that one who was not "aggrieved" so as to satisfy standing requirements might nevertheless be granted standing as a taxpayer if certain preconditions were met.

Pittsburgh Palisades Park, 888 A.2d at 661. Accordingly, we no longer consider *Price* to be controlling precedent on the question of taxpayer standing.

(citing *Upper Bucks Cty. Vocational-Tech. Sch. Educ. Ass'n v. Upper Bucks Cty. Vocational-Tech. Sch. Joint Comm.*, 474 A.2d 1120, 1122 (Pa. 1984)).

As noted above, Appellants, or a subset thereof, satisfy the test for traditional standing to challenge pre-enforcement the Minors Ordinance, the Discharge Ordinance, the Lost/Stolen Ordinance, and the Park Ordinance. Accordingly, it is unnecessary to assess whether Appellants also enjoy taxpayer standing to challenge these ordinances. We have also concluded that Appellants do not satisfy the traditional test for standing with respect to their challenges to the State of Emergency Ordinance. Accordingly, we must consider whether First, Bullock, and FOAC, on behalf of its members who pay taxes to the City (which would include First and Bullock), should be afforded taxpayer standing to challenge that ordinance.

Although Appellants contend that the City has expended and continues to expend public funds in the enforcement and prosecution of the challenged ordinances, there is no specific allegation in the Complaint that the City is incurring any expense in the prosecution and enforcement of the State of Emergency Ordinance. As noted above, that ordinance only becomes effective when the Mayor declares a state of emergency under certain extreme circumstances. Unlike the other ordinances, which are currently in effect and subject to active and ongoing policing and enforcement within the City, there is no allegation in the Complaint that the City can presently cite anyone for violating the State of Emergency Ordinance. The mere existence of the State of Emergency Ordinance, which imposes no stress on the City's coffers, poses no harm to First, Bullock, and FOAC's members *as taxpayers*. Taxpayer standing, therefore, is not an appropriate alternative basis to allow them to challenge the State of Emergency Ordinance.

B. Immunity Defense

As a matter of procedure, the affirmative defense of immunity should not be raised by preliminary objection but in an answer to the complaint under the heading “New Matter.” Pa. R.C.P. Nos. 1028, 1030. Accordingly, Appellants are technically correct that the City Defendants improperly raised the defense of immunity in paragraph 48 of their Preliminary Objections.

Nonetheless, the trial court overruled Appellants’ preliminary objection, seeking to strike that defense from the City Defendants’ Preliminary Objections, citing this Court’s decision in *Feldman v. Hoffman*, 107 A.3d 821 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2014), *appeal denied*, 121 A.3d 497 (Pa. 2015). In *Feldman*, we observed that, as a technical matter, the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure prohibit a defendant from raising the affirmative defense of immunity by way of preliminary objection. Should a plaintiff wish to contest the defense on this procedural ground, the plaintiff must file a preliminary objection to the preliminary objection. *Orange Stones v. City of Reading*, 87 A.3d 1014, 1022 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2014). Where, however, the asserted affirmative defense is clearly applicable on the face of the complaint, the court will consider it unless the plaintiff advances some reason, “other than prolonging the matter,” to defer consideration. *Feldman*, 107 A.3d at 835.

In their preliminary objection to the City Defendants’ Preliminary Objections, Appellants only raised the technical/procedural challenge to the City Defendants’ inclusion of the immunity defense in their Preliminary Objections. Consistent with *Feldman*, the trial court appropriately overruled Appellants’ preliminary objection. We stress, however, that the trial court has not yet ruled on the merits of the asserted immunity defense, ruling instead that Appellants lacked

standing and dismissing the Complaint on that basis. Whether the defense is “clearly applicable on the face of the [c]omplaint” remains an open question. *Feldman*, 107 A.3d at 835.

III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, we conclude that Appellants have standing to challenge the legality of the Discharge Ordinance, the Lost/Stolen Ordinance, and the Park Ordinance. We also conclude that FOAC has associational standing to challenge the legality of the Minors Ordinance. Appellants, however, do not have standing, under traditional standing principles or as taxpayers, to challenge the legality of the State of Emergency Ordinance. Accordingly, we will affirm in part and reverse in part the trial court’s October 9, 2018 Order, dismissing the entirety of the Complaint for lack of standing. As the trial court did not err in overruling Appellants’ preliminary objection to the City Defendants’ Preliminary Objections, we will affirm the trial court’s January 4, 2018 Order.

P. KEVIN BROBSON, Judge

Judge Covey did not participate in the decision of this case.

IN THE COMMONWEALTH COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Firearm Owners Against Crime;	:	
Kim Stolfer; Joshua First; and	:	
Howard Bullock,	:	
Appellants	:	
	:	
v.	:	No. 1434 C.D. 2018
	:	
City of Harrisburg	:	
Mayor Eric Papenfuse; and	:	
Police Chief Thomas Carter	:	

ORDER

AND NOW, this 12th day of September, 2019, the October 9, 2018 Order of the Dauphin County Court of Common Pleas (trial court), dismissing Appellants' Complaint for lack of standing, is AFFIRMED in part and REVERSED in part. The January 4, 2018 Order of the trial court, overruling Appellants' preliminary objection, is AFFIRMED.

P. KEVIN BROBSON, Judge

IN THE COMMONWEALTH COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Firearm Owners Against Crime; Kim :
Stolfer; Joshua First; and Howard :
Bullock, :
Appellants :
: No. 1434 C.D. 2018
v. :
: Argued: April 10, 2019
City of Harrisburg Mayor Eric :
Papenfuse; and Police Chief :
Thomas Carter :

BEFORE: HONORABLE MARY HANNAH LEAVITT, President Judge
HONORABLE RENÉE COHN JUBELIRER, Judge
HONORABLE ROBERT SIMPSON, Judge
HONORABLE P. KEVIN BROBSON, Judge
HONORABLE PATRICIA A. McCULLOUGH, Judge
HONORABLE CHRISTINE FIZZANO CANNON, Judge
HONORABLE ELLEN CEISLER, Judge

CONCURRING/DISSENTING OPINION
BY JUDGE McCULLOUGH

FILED: September 12, 2019

I agree with the Majority that Firearm Owners Against Crime (FOAC), Kim Stolfer, Joshua First, and Howard Bullock (collectively, Appellants) have standing to challenge the legality of four sections of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Harrisburg (Code), to wit, Section 3-345.2 (Discharge Ordinance), Section 3-345.4 (Lost/Stolen Ordinance), and Section 10.301.13 (Park Ordinance). I also agree that FOAC has associational standing to challenge Section 3-345.1 of the Code (Minors Ordinance). I write separately, however, because I disagree with the Majority's conclusion that Appellants lacked standing to challenge Section 3-355.2 of the Code prohibiting the sale or transfer of firearms and ammunition during a

period of emergency declaration by the Mayor of Harrisburg and authorizing the Mayor to prohibit the public possession of firearms during such a state of emergency (State of Emergency Ordinance).¹

¹ In pertinent part, this Section states,

A. Whenever the Mayor declares that a state of emergency exists, the following emergency prohibitions shall thereupon be in effect during the period of said emergency and throughout the City:

(1) The sale or transfer of possession, with or without consideration, the offering to sell or so transfer and the purchase of any ammunition, guns or other firearms of any size or description.

(2) The displaying by or in any store or shop of any ammunition, guns or other firearms of any size or description.

(3) The possession in a public place of a rifle or shotgun by a person, except a duly authorized law enforcement officer or person in military service acting in an official performance of his or her duty.

B. The Mayor may order and promulgate all or any of the following emergency measures, in whole or in part, with such limitations and conditions as he or she may determine appropriate; any such emergency measures so ordered and promulgated shall thereupon be in effect during the period of said emergency and in the area or areas for which the emergency has been declared:

...

(8) The prohibition of the possession in a public place or park of weapons, including but not limited to firearms, bows and arrows, air rifles, slingshots, knives, razors, blackjacks, billy clubs, or missiles of any kind.

Code, §3-355.2.

“[W]here a trial court sustains preliminary objections on the merits, it is generally an abuse of discretion to dismiss a complaint without leave to amend.” *Jones v. City of Philadelphia*, 893 A.2d 837, 846 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2006) (internal quotation marks omitted). “The right to amend should not be withheld where there is some reasonable possibility that amendment can be accomplished successfully.” *Otto v. American Mutual Insurance Co.*, 393 A.2d 450, 451 (Pa. 1978).

Here, the City of Harrisburg, Mayor Eric Papenfuse, and Police Chief Thomas Carter (collectively, City Defendants) filed preliminary objections and, regarding the State of Emergency Ordinance, argued that Appellants lacked standing because they did not plead an imminent emergency would occur, which, according to the City Defendants, is necessary to trigger the provisions. In their response to the preliminary objections, Appellants asserted that Plaintiffs First, Bollock, and Stolfer have been subject to the provisions of the State of Emergency Ordinance. In particular, Appellants assert that Plaintiff First, as a Harrisburg resident, has lived through two states of emergency, one declared in 2011 and one declared during the pendency of this case in January 2016, which triggered the non-discretionary prohibitions in Section (A) of the State of Emergency Ordinance. (Reproduced Record (R.R.) at 2, 44.)² Crucially, Appellants sought the right to file an amended complaint. *Id.* at 47. They also noted that the City Defendants are actively enforcing

² Appellants observed that the State of Emergency Ordinance has two sections. Unlike Section 3-355.2(B), Section 3-355.2(A) of the Code, which in relevant part states, “Whenever the Mayor declares that a state of emergency exists, the following emergency prohibitions **shall** thereupon be in effect,” makes the applicable restrictions effective immediately upon the declaration of a state of emergency by the Mayor. Code, §3-355.2(A) (emphasis added). Therefore, the prohibition on “possession in a public place of a rifle or shotgun by a person, except a duly authorized law enforcement officer or person in military service acting in an official performance of his duty,” amongst others listed in Section 3-355.2(A), applied to Appellants for the duration of the state of emergency declared in January 2016. Code, §3-355.2(A)(3).

these Ordinances, including the State of Emergency Ordinance, which provides Appellants with standing to seek equitable relief in the form of a declaration and an injunction.

The Majority holds that Appellants lack standing to challenge the legality of this Ordinance because they failed “to allege any facts in their [c]omplaint under which we can conclude that this particular [O]rdinance directly and immediately affects, regulates, or impairs the Individual Plaintiffs’ possession, use or enjoyment of their firearms.” Majority Op. at 16. Notably, however, Appellants have alleged that they were subject to this Ordinance’s restrictions during the pendency of this suit and they seek the ability to amend their complaint to include these facts. Because the right to amend must not be withheld where there is some possibility that amendment can be accomplished successfully, *Otto*, 393 A.2d at 451, Appellants must be permitted to do so here. Given the facts Appellants have alleged in their response, if permitted to include them in an amended complaint, I believe they would sufficiently demonstrate standing to challenge this Ordinance.

Furthermore, the Majority’s salient point that Appellants possess standing with regard to the other sections of the Code because the “[a]dditional factual development that would result from awaiting an actual’ criminal proceeding enforcing these [O]rdinances ‘is not likely to shed more light upon the . . . question of law presented . . . to the [O]rdinances’” applies equally to the State of Emergency Ordinance. Majority Op. at 23 (quoting *Robinson Township, Washington County v. Cmwlth.*, 83 A.3d 901, 999 (Pa. 2013)). Appellants are presented with an equally untenable choice with regards to this Ordinance as the Majority acknowledges Appellants are faced with in regards to the other Ordinances: “They can curb their conduct to conform to the [O]rdinance[’s] mandates or they can willfully violate the

law and face criminal prosecution.” Majority Op. at 22. I disagree that Appellants should be forced to wait until another state of emergency is declared until they are deemed to have standing to challenge the State of Emergency Ordinance, particularly where they allege that they have been subject to its parameters during the pendency of this very suit.

Finally, but not insignificantly, as the Supreme Court of the United States observed in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570 (2008), that whatever the Second Amendment might protect more broadly, “it surely elevates above all other interests the **right of law-abiding, responsible citizens** to use arms in defense of hearth and home.” *Id.* at 635 (emphasis added).³ “Self-defense is a basic right, recognized by many legal systems from ancient times to the present day, and . . . individual self-defense is ‘the central component’ of the Second Amendment right.” *McDonald v. City of Chicago*, 561 U.S. 742, 767–68 (2010) (quoting *Heller*, 554 U.S. at 599). In *McDonald*, the Court cautioned against treating the Second Amendment as a “second-class right, subject to an entirely different body of rules than the other Bill of Rights guarantees.” 561 U.S. at 780. “[T]he text of the Amendment, as interpreted by *Heller* and *McDonald*, points toward the conclusion that ‘bear’ implies a right to carry firearms publicly for self-defense.” *Young v. Hawaii*, 896 F.3d 1044, 105. (9th Cir. 2018). “Once identified as an individual right focused on self-defense, the right to bear arms must guarantee some right to self-defense in public” and the courts “are satisfied that the Second Amendment

³ However, as the Supreme Court noted in *Heller*, “nothing in [its] opinion should be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as school and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms.” 554 U.S. at 626-27.

encompasses a right to carry a firearm openly in public for self-defense.” *Id.* at 1068; *Wrenn v. District of Columbia*, 864 F.3d 650, 661 (D.C. Cir. 2017); *Moore v. Madigan*, 702 F.3d 933, 936-37 (7th Cir. 2012).⁴

As alleged in the Petition for Review, self-defense is most certainly implicated in the event of a declaration of a state of emergency by the Mayor of Harrisburg. *Id.* at 599 (emphasis added). According to City Defendants, in order for the Mayor to declare a state of emergency, there must be ““violence or a flagrant and substantial defiance of or resistance to a lawful exercise of public authority’ [which] creates ‘clear and present danger of a riot, civil disorder or other general public disorder, widespread disobedience of the law and substantial injury to persons or property’” (City Defendants’ Br. at 11) (quoting Code, §3-355). As *Heller* made clear, it is *precisely* during such times that the protections afforded by the Second Amendment are the most critical.⁵ To require Appellants to wait until

⁴ Further, the Ordinance prohibits the sale or transfer of possession of ammunition and firearms in a state of emergency, yet the Courts have held that the core Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms for self-defense would be meaningless “without the ability to acquire arms.” *Teixeira v. County of Alameda*, 873 F.3d 670, 677 (9th Cir. 2017) (en banc); *see id.* at 678 (quoting cases) (“The right to keep arms, necessarily involves the right to purchase them”); (“[T]he right to keep and bear arms for self-defense under the Second Amendment ... must also include the right to acquire a firearm”). And, although the Second Amendment “does not explicitly protect ammunition ..., without bullets, the right to bear arms would be meaningless.” *Jackson v. City and County of San Francisco*, 746 F.3d 953, 967 (9th Cir. 2014).

⁵ To me, footnote 15 of the Majority’s opinion only serves to underscore the inescapable conclusion that under *Heller*, Appellants possess standing to challenge the State of Emergency Ordinance, which is applicable only in times of civil unrest, in order to vindicate their core Second Amendment right to bear arms in self-defense when the need to do so is at its zenith. No one doubts the need to address these times, but we cannot deny the Appellants the right to challenge the manner in which their constitutional rights might be abridged.

Quite simply, the question before us is whether Appellants have standing. We are not determining the validity of the Ordinance, yet this appears to be the thrust of the Majority’s footnote 15, which unfortunately is not based on facts in the record before us.

another state of emergency occurs to grant standing, where they allege to have already been impacted by the Ordinance, is untenable. For these reasons, I would grant standing to Appellants to also challenge section 3-335.2 of the Code.

PATRICIA A. McCULLOUGH, Judge