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Jessica E. Miranda

State Representative

Chairman Lang, Vice Chairman Plummer, and Ranking Member Leland, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on HB 240, the Child Access Prevention Law, to prohibit the negligent storage of a firearm.

Last year, nearly 40,000 Americans lost their lives to gun violence. That's 40,000 people in one year alone¹.

As a mother of three young girls; as a former school board president who constantly kept the district's students at the forefront of my thoughts; and as a member of the Ohio House of Representatives with a constituent whose niece was murdered in Parkland, Florida - I believe strongly that we must take reasonable steps to build safer communities for all of us. The constituent I am referring to is named Abbie Youkilis and her niece was Jamie Guttenberg, who was killed in the Parkland school shooting.

It is too late for Jamie and the other 40,000 Americans who have lost their lives to gun violence just last year, but it is not too late to try and prevent future tragedies. This is the time to act.

This bill, HB 240, would make it illegal for a gun owner to keep their firearm in a location where it could be easily and unlawfully accessed by a minor. I myself am a concealed carry permit holder. I understand the 2nd Amendment and I want to be clear: under HB 240, we are not taking away anyone's guns. What we are doing is asking to take appropriate action to help prevent more tragedies like what has already happened in places like Parkland, Florida, Aurora, Colorado and at Sandy Hook.

We also want to prevent tragic and all too frequent situations like the four-year old who was shot and killed by his five-year old sibling in Texas last month², like the 2 year-old from South Carolina in June who shot himself in the head with a gun from his grandmother's purse³ or like

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/18/us/gun-deaths.html>

² <https://abcnews.go.com/US/year-boy-shot-dead-allegedly-year-sibling-mom/story?id=65638384>

³ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/year-boy-accidentally-shoots-kills-gun-grandmas-purse/story?id=63859180>

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the Californian child in January who shot his mother with a shotgun he found in the back of the car. This happened just steps away from a preschool⁴. And honestly, we could spend the rest of our day telling the stories of lives lost and forever altered from a child accidentally shooting either themselves or another person with an unlocked, loaded firearm.

An estimated 7% of US children -- or 4.6 million -- live in homes with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm, according to a study published in the Journal of Urban Health in 2018. This estimate, from 2015, "is more than twice as high as estimates reported in 2002, [which was] the last time a nationally representative survey assessed this."⁵

HB 240 simply says that a firearm owner should store it safely, ensuring that such a weapon is inoperable by any person other than the owner or another lawfully authorized user. Under this bill, if a minor gains access to a firearm like in the stories we shared, it would be a 3rd degree misdemeanor and if a minor causes injury or death through that access, it would be a 1st degree felony.

Our hope is that these measures will ensure that every gun owner practices the best and safest storage policy possible for any and all household guns.

According to Giffords Law Center:

“Household guns, often the most easily accessible firearms for youth, are a major source of weapons used in school shootings, youth suicides, and unintentional shooting deaths among children.

- *Studies show that between 70 and 90% of guns used in youth suicides, unintentional shootings among children, and school shooting perpetrated by shooters under the age of 18 are acquired from the home or the homes of relatives or friends.*
- *Several studies have shown that the risk of suicide and unintentional shootings among youth increases in homes where guns are kept loaded and/or unlocked.*

⁴ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/child-accidentally-shoots-mother-shotgun-backseat-car/story?id=60588706>

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/05/us/guns-child-access-prevention-laws/index.html>

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Safe firearm storage helps prevent gun deaths and injuries in children, and research suggests that CAP laws increase safe storage behavior. This makes CAP laws incredibly effective at preventing gun deaths and injuries among children and teens.

- *Estimates suggest that modest increases in the number of American homes safely storing firearms could prevent almost a third of youth gun deaths due to suicide and unintentional firearm injury.*
- *Numerous studies over the past 20 years have found that child access prevention laws can reduce suicide and unintentional gun deaths and injuries among children and teens by up to 54%, with the greatest reductions occurring in states which require safe storage of firearms.”⁶*

Simply put, Child Access Prevention laws work – and in fact, they are currently working in 27 other states. States with this law in place have 40% fewer suicides per capita and 68% fewer firearm suicides per capita than states without these laws⁷. This is a very commonsense way that we build safer communities together.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today on the importance of HB 240 and we will be happy to answer any questions at this time.

⁶ <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/child-consumer-safety/child-access-prevention/>

⁷ <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/child-consumer-safety/child-access-prevention/>