



**Vernon Sykes, Ph.D.**  
State Senator  
28th District

**Ohio Senate**  
Senate Building  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
ohiosenate.gov/sykes  
Vernon.Sykes@ohiosenate.gov  
(614) 466-7041

**Committees:**  
Ranking Member – Education  
Health, Human Services and Medicaid  
Local Government, Public Safety and  
Veterans Affairs  
Public Utilities  
Finance  
**Subcommittee:**  
Vice Chair –Finance Primary and  
Secondary Education

Good morning Chairman Coley, Vice-Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni and members of the Government Oversight and Reform committee. Thank you for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 279, which requires firearm owners to properly store their guns.

On May 21, 2018 a 9-year-old boy shot his 8-year-old cousin in my district. The boys were playing video games when the 9-year-old boy left to get a snack and found a handgun in the kitchen cupboard. The boy picked up the gun and unwittingly discharged it, striking his 8-year old cousin in the abdomen. Tragically, incidents like this occur regularly across Ohio.

Research has shown that easily accessible firearms are associated with an increase in suicide and unintentional deaths among young people. In 2015, 40 percent of children under the age of 19 who died in gun-related incidents, died as a result of suicide or unintentional shootings in the United States. The purpose of this bill is to ensure our children's safety by requiring that gun owners properly store their firearms. This bill does not impact a citizen's right to own or use guns if they properly store their guns. This bill rightly asserts that safe gun storage is a requirement for responsible gun ownership.

Under this bill, a firearm must be in a locked container that can only be unlocked with a key or combination or, is secured with a trigger lock. The bill requires that all federally licensed firearm dealers inform the purchaser at the time of sale how to properly store a firearm, and that improper storage of a firearm in a location that is accessible to a minor is in violation of state law. Compliance costs to the bill are negligible. Price points for trigger locks and combination lock cases range from \$7 to \$10 and \$20 to \$50 respectively. However the benefits are substantial in one study, it was found that there was a 23 percent drop in unintentional firearm deaths among children younger than 15, in twelve states that had gun safety storage laws in place for at least one year.<sup>1</sup> Senate Bill 279 will serve to educate gun owners on how to properly store their firearms therefore encouraging and incentivizing proper stewardship of firearms and increasing the safety of children, families and communities.

I appreciate your consideration of SB 279. Senator Tavares and I are happy to answer any questions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Peter Cummings et al., *State Gun Safe Storage Laws and Child Mortality Due to Firearms*, 278 JAMA 1084, 1084 (Oct. 1997), <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/418289>. ↗