



State Representative

Cecil Thomas

Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 217

Government Oversight Committee

October 31, 2023

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for HB 217, which requires gun trigger locks be attached and provided with firearms sales by federally licensed firearms dealers.

Now that we have heard a little bit about the scope of the problem we face and what HB 217 does, let me spend some more time explaining how trigger locks help reduce gun violence. When we think of gun violence, we typically imagine mass shootings like the one that occurred in Maine last week. But gun violence encompasses more than the high-profile mass killings we see in the headlines. Two separate, but equally concerning, categories of gun violence, include gun suicides and accidental firearms deaths or injuries.

Gun suicides claim the lives of roughly 25,000 Americans every year.¹ In fact, nearly six out of every ten firearm deaths in the US are suicides by gun.² In addition to these 25,000 deaths, 500 more Americans die from unintentional firearm accidents.³ And, to make matters worse, for every unintentional firearm death, there are over 80 unintentional nonfatal injuries caused by guns.⁴

¹ <https://www.everytown.org/issues/gun-suicide/>

² Id.

³ <https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/unintentional-shootings/>

⁴ <https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/unintentional-injury/>

So what can be done to minimize these firearm deaths and injuries? Responsible gun ownership is about more than how a firearm is used. It is also about how a firearm is stored when it is not in use. As a result, one solution resides in the secure storage of firearms. Here, I am using “secure” to refer to firearm storage practices that prevent unauthorized access to guns. And we believe trigger locks will prevent such access.

Trigger locks are mechanisms that fit over the trigger and trigger guard of a weapon to prevent them from firing. They can come with a push-button keypad, combination, or key that opens the lock. This means, then, that only the person with the proper code, combination, or key can unlock the firearm. Unauthorized users are consequently prevented from pulling the trigger.

Studies show that these trigger locks are effective in preventing firearm deaths. One estimates that locks could prevent between 6% and 32% of youth firearm deaths.⁵ But let us set aside the data for a moment and consider a real-world example. Four months ago a pregnant mother in Norwalk, Ohio was shot in the back by her two-year-old son. She was rushed to the hospital where an emergency c-section failed and she later lost her life. This is the type of preventable tragedy that we believe HB 217 will address. It is time to finally do something.

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the chance to testify today in support of HB 217. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

⁵ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2733158>