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11th House District

Sponsor Testimony: 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 on House Bill 215, which requires trigger locks with the sale of all firearms by federally licensed firearm dealers.

As the state legislature continues to introduce and pass extreme legislation expanding access to firearms, Ohioans are dying from firearm-related deaths at alarming rates. It's important to look at gun violence from a public health perspective because it is an epidemic plaguing the country.

The Ohio Department of Health¹ reported a near all-time high of 1,911 deaths from firearms in 2021. Children and teenagers accounted for 221 of these deaths. Gun deaths are preventable with sensible legislation that does not restrict one's Second Amendment right to bear arms, like House Bill 215.

House Bill 215 would require trigger locks to be sold with every firearm sold by a federally licensed firearm dealer. Under current Ohio law, trigger locks must only be *offered* at the time of a sale. My joint-sponsor's testimony will expand more on how these locks work, but I am going to highlight why there is a critical need for implementing safe storage legislation.

Currently, less than half of gun owners in the United States safely store their firearms². Trigger locks can prevent accidental child deaths and make it harder for people to access firearms during mental health crises, especially for youths attempting suicide. Safe storage can and will lower suicides by firearm.

According to Everytown, an average of 938 people die from suicide by firearms every year in Ohio³, making up more than half of all suicides and 61% of all firearm deaths in the state⁴. A study published in the National Library of Medicine revealed a direct correlation between safe

¹ <https://publicapps.odh.ohio.gov/EDW/DataBrowser/Browse/Mortality>

² <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/how-safe-and-secure-gun-storage-reduces-injury-saves-lives#:~:text=Through%20our%20survey%20work%2C%20we,not%20stored%20safely%20and%20securely>.

³ <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Gun-Violence-in-Ohio-1.pdf>

⁴ <https://preventfirearmsuicide.efsgv.org/states/ohio/>

firearm storage and a decreased risk in suicide rates⁵. Ensuring that firearms are safely locked up can help stop a potential impulsive decision, or an accidental shooting by a child, which we see too often on the news.

Nationwide Children's Hospital reports that 1 in 3 families with children have at least one gun in the home. Almost 40% of all accidental shooting deaths among children between the ages of 11 and 14 happen in the home of a friend⁶. Responsible gun owners must be able to safely store their firearms to protect their family and those in their homes. By passing House Bill 215, we can reduce innocent gun deaths and suicide rates.

I appreciate the chance to provide testimony on this commonsense legislation. My joint-sponsor is unable to be here today but has submitted written testimony for the committee to look over. I am more than happy to answer any questions.

⁵<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4566524/>

⁶<https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/research/areas-of-research/center-for-injury-research-and-policy/injury-topics/general/gun-safety>