



**OPPONENT TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 58
HOUSE INSURANCE COMMITTEE | OCTOBER 11, 2023**

Chair Lampton, Vice Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Miranda, and members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written opposition testimony on Senate Bill 58. We do so on behalf of the Ohio Mayors Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's 30 largest cities.

We are submitting this as opposition testimony for two reasons: First, we believe this bill violates Ohio's constitutional right to home rule and local self-governance. Second, we do not know of any Ohio communities that are proposing a local insurance mandate on firearm owners or other such fees, and thus fail to understand the need for such preemption of home rule authority.

While local Ohio communities do not appear to be pursuing such a requirement, we do believe local leaders must have the ability to protect their communities from the impact that firearms are having on violent crime, and to help protect children from unintentional and accidental shootings. Thus, we'd like to take the opportunity, while testifying against yet another bill proposing to preempt cities' authority to regulate firearms in any way, to suggest an idea: **we urge you, should you choose to advance this bill against our recommendation, to add an amendment to the bill that will give cities the permissive authority to impose reasonable safe storage laws for firearms.**

According to Nationwide Children's Hospital, a child or teen is killed with a gun every 2 hours and 48 minutes in the U.S. Millions of children live in homes with guns, and 75% of children 5 to 14 years old who live in homes with guns report knowing where the guns are stored.¹ 22% report handling a gun in the home without their parents' or caregivers' knowledge.

Accidental shootings are preventable. Ohio has too many horror stories of children finding unlocked and loaded guns in their homes and killing or injuring themselves or others. Additionally, suicide rates among children and adolescents have increased by over 80% since 2010, and children who live in homes with guns are over 4 times *more likely* to successfully complete a suicide attempt than those who do not.²

Despite these facts, the state of Ohio does not have a law requiring the safe storage of a firearm. If the state is going to prohibit cities from mandating insurance coverage or certain fees for firearm owners, it

¹ Kristol Das, MD, *Safer Storage: Preventing Child Gun Injuries* (October 27, 2021), <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/700childrens/2021/10/safer-storage-preventing-child-gun-injuries>.

² Matthew Miller, MD, & Deborah Azrael, PhD, *Access to Firearms Increases Child and Adolescent Suicide* (June 5, 2020), <https://www.srkd.org/research/access-firearms-increases-child-and-adolescent-suicide>.

should consider amending R.C. 9.68 to allow local governments to implement safe storage requirements. This will help protect children and youth and could significantly reduce the number of firearm deaths in Ohio.

The City of Columbus passed a safe storage ordinance in late 2022 and, just weeks later, prosecuted its first case under that ordinance. The case involved a caregiver who left a loaded handgun between the couch cushions that was then found by a toddler, who accidentally fired just inches from their face.³ The city attempted to hold that individual accountable under the city's safe storage law, but the Ohio Attorney General has intervened to block the city's enforcement of the local law. We hope that we can all agree that we *should* hold individuals accountable when they recklessly store their firearms while children are present in their homes. Allowing the City of Columbus and other cities in Ohio to impose such regulations would have minimal to no impact on Ohioans' Second Amendment rights.

If the state legislature would like to take away one local tool to help protect against gun death—a ban against local insurance mandates for firearms—it should consider providing another tool to local governments instead, which is to allow for the permissive authority of local governments to require safe storage of a firearm. Thus, we urge you to either:

1. Decline to advance SB 58 out of committee all together; or
2. If you choose to advance SB 58, add an amendment that would permit municipalities to regulate the safe storage of firearms.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

³ WBNS 10TV, *Columbus man pleads guilty in first case of city's new safe firearm storage law* (April 11, 2023), <https://www.10tv.com/article/news/crime/man-pleads-guilty-columbus-new-safe-firearm-storage-law/530-38061926-593a-4a97-bcbd-688c6ca53b94>.