

Committees

Civil Justice
Behavioral Health
Health Provider Services



Committees:

Infrastructure
Families & Aging

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Ladies and gentlemen of the Ways and Means Committee, esteemed colleagues, and fellow Ohioans, I would first like to thank Chairman Bill Roemer, Vice Chair Brian Lorenz and Ranking Member Representative Troy,

I stand before you today with great enthusiasm and conviction to offer and ask for this committee's strong support for House Bill 186, a crucial piece of legislation that addresses a matter of utmost importance for the safety and well-being of our citizens in Ohio. As the sponsor of this bill in the Ohio 135th General Assembly, its passage is not just a matter of policy but a testament to our commitment to the safety and security of our great state.

House Bill 186, at its core, is about promoting responsible firearm ownership and ensuring the safety of our communities. This bill seeks to provide a sales tax exemption for firearm safety devices, such as gun locks and firearm safes. In doing so, it sends a clear message that Ohio prioritizes the well-being of its citizens and aims to reduce the risk of firearm-related accidents and tragedies.

Firearm safety is an issue that transcends political divides, and it is our collective responsibility to take meaningful action to prevent accidents and unauthorized access to firearms. House Bill 186 is a common-sense approach to achieving this goal by making essential safety devices more accessible and affordable to Ohioans.

By exempting these safety devices from sales tax, we encourage responsible firearm ownership and empower individuals to take proactive steps in securing their firearms. Gun locks and safes are proven tools in preventing accidents, thefts, and unauthorized access to weapons, and their widespread use can save lives.

This bill also aligns with our commitment to education and awareness. It encourages responsible firearm owners to take the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of their families and communities. By providing a financial incentive to purchase these safety devices, we promote a culture of responsibility and accountability among firearm owners.

In April, in Middletown, Ohio, police investigated the accidental shooting of a four-year-old with an unsecured gun.

<https://www.wcpo.com/news/local-news/butler-county/middletown/police-child-shot-himself-in-middletown-park-after-picking-up-unsecured-gun>

In June of this year, in Norwalk, Ohio, we learned how a toddler accidentally got a hold of a gun and shot this pregnant mom.

<https://abc7chicago.com/gun-safety-pregnant-woman-shot-norwalk-ohio-norkwalk-news/13410862/>

Also, this past June, in Columbus, police responded to an accidental shooting involving a teenager on the northside.

<https://www.nbc4i.com/news/local-news/columbus/14-year-old-injured-in-accidental-shooting-a-growing-trend-in-central-ohio/>

On August 1, in the District, I am honored to represent, a 13-year-old was shot and killed by an 11-year-old who got a hold of a gun

<https://www.cleveland19.com/2023/08/01/13-year-old-cleveland-boy-accidently-shot-by-11-year-old/>

In August, a 4-year-old boy in Akron, Ohio, shot himself after getting a hold of an unsecured handgun and eventually died.

<https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/4-year-old-akron-boy-in-serious-condition-after-accidentally-shooting-himself-police-say>

The above examples exemplify the need to educate Ohioans on the condition and usage of Gun safety devices. It has been documented that most children in the United States who die from an accidental shooting are playing with guns at home or mistaking them for toys. Research from the *scientific journal Injury Epidemiology notes that 90% of guns used in such shooting deaths were unlocked and loaded.

<https://injepijournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-023-00438-5>

House Bill 186 has been carefully crafted with the input of experts, advocacy groups, and concerned citizens. It is a well-balanced approach that respects the rights of responsible firearm owners while prioritizing the safety of our communities.

House Bill 186 has received bi-partisan Organization support. When given a second hearing, you will proponent testimony from Organizations such as Buckeye Firearms Association, Moms Demand Action, and other pro-gun and pro-common-sense advocates.

I implore each committee member to recognize the significance of House Bill 186 and its potential to save lives and reduce firearm-related accidents in Ohio. By supporting this bill, you are advancing the interests of your constituents and contributing to our state's overall safety and security.

In closing, I sincerely thank my fellow legislators, advocacy groups, and the people of Ohio who have supported this vital initiative. Together, we can make Ohio a safer place for all its residents. Please bring House Bill 186 for the required hearing, pass House Bill 186 of this committee, and take a significant step towards a safer, more responsible Ohio.

Thank you for your time, dedication, and commitment to our great state's safety and security. And now I turn it over to my Co-sponsor- Rep. Brennan.

